United Nations S/PV.5386

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5386th meeting

Wednesday, 15 March 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mayoral	(Argentina)
Members:	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2006/137)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-27196 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2006/137)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. al-Istrabadi (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Qazi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/137, which contains the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004).

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and by Mr. John Bolton, representative of the United States of America, on behalf of the multinational force.

I now give the floor to Mr. Qazi.

Mr. Qazi: The report of the Secretary-General before the Council details the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) from 8 December 2005 to 7 March 2006. I welcome the opportunity to brief the Council today on the work of UNAMI and its ongoing efforts to assist the people of Iraq in implementing its mandate under resolution 1546 (2004).

As the report notes, despite the notable achievement of all the political transition benchmarks in 2005 that were envisaged in resolution 1546 (2004), Iraq continues to face enormous security, political and reconstruction challenges. Given these grave challenges, Iraq's progress in meeting its transitional benchmarks is all the more remarkable. UNAMI is proud to have been associated with the achievements principally of the people of Iraq, the Transitional National Assembly, the Transitional Government and the political leadership of the country in meeting the timetable. The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq and the Constitutional Drafting Committee of the Transitional National Assembly deserve particular mention for bringing about these accomplishments.

These achievements should have provided a basis for the next phase of the political process in Iraq, one characterized by a fully sovereign and democratically elected Government. However, the bombing of the Shia shrine in Samarra on 22 February 2006 and its violent aftermath have demonstrated that Iraq's political transition is increasingly threatened by intersectarian violence, exacerbated by the continuing insurgency and counter-insurgency, acts of terror and a deteriorating human rights situation.

While sectarian fissures have always been an integral part of Iraq's political history, today they have come to dominate and almost define Iraqi politics and its future prospects. As the Secretary-General has emphasized in his report, sectarian violence has emerged as a main threat to the security and stability of Iraq. It is fed by growing mistrust between communities despite the fact that, in their daily lives and in their individual attitudes towards each other, most Iraqis emphatically reject and transcend this divide. Overcoming the sectarian divide is, above all, the responsibility of Iraq's political leadership. If that

responsibility is not taken up with the urgent priority it requires, the divide will severely undermine efforts to promote security and strengthen national cohesion. The Secretary-General has therefore emphasized that promoting mutual trust and national reconciliation must remain the top priority, and that the need for sustained intercommunal dialogue and confidence-building measures to promote national reconciliation is all the more urgent now.

The calls by a large spectrum of Iraq's political and religious leaders for restraint and peaceful dialogue and the quick, concrete action taken by the Government of Iraq to bring the situation under control are promising signs that the potential for peaceful political solutions exists. For my part, I have stepped up my engagement with Iraq's political, religious and civic leaders with a view to encouraging greater intercommunal understanding, including through the Political Consultative Committee convened by Prime Minister al-Jaafari, which was formed in response to the Samara attack and its aftermath.

UNAMI is also urging the Government, Iraq's political and religious leaders and civil society to demonstrate that they will not be divided and defeated by the nefarious aims of those seeking to undermine Iraq's political process and instead take measures aimed at promoting the rule of law and human rights. Together with UNESCO and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, UNAMI has also launched an initiative to assist the Government of Iraq in restoring the Samarra shrine and other religious sites that were damaged during the recent violence. The international response has so far been very encouraging. Taken together, these measures will, hopefully, contribute to the process of building mutual trust and national accord.

Despite some grounds for hope, the overall situation in Iraq remains tense and volatile. Recent developments have made negotiations on government formation more difficult. This has created a dangerous and prolonged political vacuum. To prevent the situation from deteriorating further and to foster an environment in which all Iraqis can discuss the future of their country free of intimidation and fear, all efforts must now be directed at strengthening the momentum of the political process, with a view to developing an agreed national compact that is responsive to the aspirations of all Iraq's communities. Continued support from the Security Council and its members will be essential in this endeavour.

With the expected convening of the Council of Representatives on 16 March — that is, tomorrow — it is now incumbent on all concerned to move swiftly to form a fully inclusive Government, whose credibility and effectiveness will depend on whether it will be able to inspire the confidence and trust of all Iraqis and establish professional, transparent and non-sectarian institutions that will practice good governance based on the rule of law and human rights.

A number of competing proposals about the composition and agenda of the new Government are currently under consideration. Everything must now be done to help the negotiating parties reach a sustainable compromise as quickly as possible. Another important step will be the constitutional review. I hope that the new parliament will use this process to reach a national consensus on a strong framework for the Iraqi State. That is an essential prerequisite for the country's long-term stability. As part of its core political mandate under paragraph 7 (a) of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), UNAMI stands ready to provide any assistance that might be necessary for the formation of an inclusive Government and is fully engaged with Iraqi leaders to support the constitutional review and the effective implementation of the constitution.

Iraq's stability is intrinsically linked to the stability in the region, and vice versa. UNAMI therefore remains engaged with regional countries and intends to step up efforts in the coming period. Over the past 18 months, my deputies and I visited Syria, Turkey, Iran, Jordan and Kuwait. On 28 March, I intend to meet Arab leaders at the eighteenth Arab Summit in Khartoum to discuss the regional situation as it relates to Iraq. As a concrete step to increase regional engagement, I have proposed the establishment of a regional contact group that would bring together Iraq's regional neighbours to discuss how to improve stability in Iraq. I intend to continue discussions on this proposal in Khartoum. I will also continue to support the initiative of the League of Arab States to hold a conference on Iraqi national accord in Baghdad in June and will continue to support the dialogue started last November in Cairo among political, religious and community leaders across Iraq.

In addition to UNAMI's political activities under paragraph 7 (a) of its mandate — which will remain a

priority in 2006 — UNAMI is also seeking to strengthen its activities in the other key areas of its mandate under paragraph 7 (b) of resolution 1546 (2004) — namely, reconstruction and development, humanitarian assistance and human rights. To this end, UNAMI is developing a phased approach that would integrate all UNAMI activities into its overall political strategy to promote national dialogue and reconciliation. Concrete priorities will be established in close consultation with the new Government and international partners.

The urgency of activities under this part of UNAMI's mandate is demonstrated by the deteriorating human rights situation. While the Government has taken initial steps, more determined measures are necessary, particularly with regard to de facto arbitrary detentions, torture and extrajudicial killings. The Multinational Force and the Iraqi security forces have a particular responsibility in this regard. In the absence of such measures, efforts to strengthen national cohesion, mutual trust and national reconciliation might prove elusive. In fulfilling its mandate, UNAMI will continue to monitor the human rights situation closely and will provide further comments and recommendations in its next bimonthly human rights report, to be released shortly.

It is clear that the current situation in Iraq constitutes a serious obstacle to the effective implementation of infrastructural and income-generating projects designed to address unemployment and the provision of basic services. If not effectively addressed, ongoing violence will prevent donor programmes from having their desired impact. Nevertheless, UNAMI intends to remain actively engaged, through its United Nations country team, to maintain its important role in donor coordination and to support humanitarian, reconstruction and development activities, circumstances permitting. UNAMI is also fully engaged in preparations for the next donor conference of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, which is now planned for July.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the designated official for security, I am accountable to the Secretary-General for the safety and security of all United Nations personnel in Iraq. In the current political and security environment in Iraq, United Nations staff members remain at risk of becoming targets of violence. Staff security, therefore, remains the Mission's overarching guiding principle. UNAMI's activities will continue to be demand-driven and focused on added value in areas of comparative advantage. An expanded role for UNAMI need not necessarily translate into an increase of the current size of the Mission. The emphasis will remain on the quality of UNAMI's assistance rather than the size of the Mission, which will be conditioned by a continuous evaluation of the security environment and the availability of security and essential life support systems.

If a more robust role is expected of the United Nations in the next phase of Iraq's political transition, there will be a concomitant need to enhance the necessary capacities within UNAMI. One requirement will be for dedicated air assets to ensure our greater operational mobility and flexibility. Despite many requests to Member States, UNAMI has not been able to secure the required dedicated air assets. That is regrettable, and a solution should be found as a matter of urgency.

With the Multinational Force moving into strategic overwatch and the Iraqi security forces not yet fully formed, trained and tested, safety and security for UNAMI staff and premises will require additional support. I thank the Governments of Fiji, Georgia, Romania and the Republic of Korea for supporting our security arrangements, and I thank the donors for their support. I am also grateful for the efforts of the Multinational Force to facilitate the movements of UNAMI staff. The continued support of the members of this Council will remain essential with regard to both UNAMI's immediate security needs and the wider issue of enhancing the capacities of Iraq's own security services.

In addition, I am grateful for the hospitality, support and facilities provided by the Governments of Jordan and Kuwait to enable UNAMI to continue to discharge its mandate under resolution 1546 (2004). Above all, I am grateful to the Government of Iraq for its continuous cooperation.

It has become apparent that the next six months in Iraq will be critical. The cloud of pessimism that has further darkened as a result of recent developments has to be lifted. While the Government of Iraq and the political leadership must discharge the primary national responsibility that devolves upon them, it is equally incumbent upon the neighbours of Iraq and the

international community to enable them to do so. UNAMI is privileged to share in that responsibility by facilitating the processes of dialogue, compromise and national reconciliation, by providing humanitarian, reconstruction and development assistance and by promoting good governance, human rights and the rule of law, as well as the establishment of democratic institutions.

Setting Iraq on an irreversible path towards a peaceful and democratic future will be a long journey. What is needed first and foremost is the commitment of the new Government of Iraq, the Security Council, regional countries and, most of all, the Iraqi people to turn the page and move forward towards a stable, peaceful and prosperous Iraq. In that endeavour, UNAMI will continue to stand by the Iraqi people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Qazi for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): As mandated by Security Council resolutions 1546 (2004) and 1637 (2005), I am pleased to report to the Council, on behalf of the 29 countries making up the Multinational Force, on the Force's progress towards the fulfilment of its mandate.

During this reporting period, we witnessed and the Security Council condemned some of the most despicable attacks in recent memory. The 22 February attack on the holy shrine of the Imams Ali Al-Hadi and Al-Hassan Al-Askari in Samarra and the ensuing attacks on other religious sites were heinous crimes as well as deliberate attempts to foment sectarian strife in Iraq and the region.

The international community understands the deep anguish caused by those attacks. We join in the calls for calm made by Iraq's religious and political leaders. We honour the memory and courage of all those who have lost their lives in the fight for a federal, democratic, pluralistic and unified Iraq, and we recognize the Iraqi people's success thus far in establishing the foundations of a new political system through free and fair elections, as well as the significant strides that have been made in training and equipping Iraq's security forces.

There have been important developments since our last report. With the successful election on 15 December 2005, the Iraqis have now met all the political benchmarks established by the Transitional Administrative Law and endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1546 (2004), save only the seating of the new Government. The 15 December election was marked by unprecedented voter turnout, a low level of violence and significant participation by all communities.

The insurgents and terrorists remain capable of and intent on carrying out attacks against Iraqi civilians, officials and security forces, with the goal of destabilizing the legitimately elected Government of Iraq and disrupting the democracy that has begun to take root there. More than 80 per cent of insurgent attacks continue to be concentrated in four of Iraq's 18 provinces: Baghdad, Al Anbar, Salah ad Din and Ninawa. Twelve provinces containing more than 50 per cent of the population experience only 6 per cent of all attacks. Although almost 80 per cent of all attacks are directed against coalition forces, Iraqis suffer 75 per cent of casualties. Insurgents have learned to avoid direct engagement with coalition forces, instead using hit-and-run attacks and attacks from a distance. Improvised explosive devices remain the primary insurgent weapon of choice.

December 2005 saw an increase in insurgent attacks leading up to the 15 December election, which resulted in a greater number of attacks in December than in November. Insurgent attacks decreased from December to January but rose again in February. The chief cause of that was the 22 February destruction of the holy shrine of the Imams Ali Al-Hadi and Al-Hassan Al-Askari, which spawned subsequent attacks on other religious sites and other violence.

Militias and other groups continue to challenge the rule of law at the local and regional levels. Attacks on Iraq's infrastructure continue to have an adverse impact on the availability of electricity and on oil revenues. Infrastructure attacks in December and January were higher than in recent months but still remained below the 2004 averages. Although the number of attacks has continued to decrease, the severity of attacks has increased. The Multinational Force will continue to work with the Iraqi Government and other international partners to improve infrastructure security.

Iraqi security forces continue to grow and improve and to conduct more and more independent

operations each day. They proved their ability to provide security to the Iraqi people during the 15 December elections, as they had done for the October referendum. Multinational forces continue to train, mentor and equip the Iraqi security forces and to hand over battle responsibilities to Iraqi forces as proficiency allows and conditions permit. Transfers are evaluated area by area and region by region, and are gradual to ensure an effective and successful handover of security responsibilities.

As of 6 March, 101 Iraqi army and special operations battalions are conducting counter-insurgency operations. Fifty-nine of these are in the lead. All 28 authorized Iraqi national police units are operational, with 8 in the lead. Sixty-five per cent of Baghdad is under the control of the Iraqi security forces. Overall, Iraqi security forces assuming battle responsibilities have increased to 2 divisions, 11 brigades and 49 battalions. Iraqi forces now total more than 240,000 Ministry of Defence and Ministry of the Interior troops trained and equipped for counter-insurgency operations. That includes nearly 112,900 Defence Ministry personnel, 87,000 police and 40,700 other forces from the Interior Ministry.

During this reporting period, the President of the United States, acting on recommendations from military commanders, authorized a decrease in the number of United States combat brigades deployed in Iraq from 17 to 15 — a reduction of approximately 7,000 troops. Although based on several factors, that decision reflects primarily the growing capability of Iraqi security forces. Several of our coalition partners are taking or planning similar measures, also based on assessments of current conditions, in close consultation with all partners.

Recent examples of how Iraqi Defence Ministry and Interior Ministry forces are progressing in the ability to provide security to the Iraqi people include the following. On 30 December, Iraqi police and army units successfully rescued the brother of a member of the Salah ad Din Provincial Council and arrested three suspects after a failed kidnapping attempt the day before. On 30 January, more than 20 Iraqi soldiers graduated from the advanced weapons training programme conducted by the Multinational Force in Al Hillah. The programme focused on individual and small-unit tactics as well as on improvised explosive devices, clearing buildings and land navigation. Those graduates will put their new skills to work training other Iraqi soldiers.

In early February, Iraqi and United States soldiers rescued dozens of people south-east of Mosul after powerful storms swept through northern Iraq, causing flooding along a tributary of the Tigris. Soldiers from the second Iraqi army division used small boats and braved strong currents to rescue almost 100 people stranded on a small islands in the swollen Great Zab river.

The Multinational Force — notably the Georgian, Romanian and South Korean contingents — continues to provide security for the United Nations in Baghdad, Basra and Erbil, respectively. Those troops provided static site security, reconnaissance, security patrols, convoy escorts, checkpoints and, when necessary, medevac and emergency evacuation. In addition, Fijian troops provide static and close-in protection for United Nations personnel and facilities in Baghdad.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), led by Special Representative Ashraf Qazi, has made essential contributions to Iraqi progress, particularly its support for the 15 December election and in Government formation. We echo UNAMI's call on the United Nations to play the fullest possible role in Iraq.

Success will be achieved when the Iraqi people can themselves secure their own safety, freedom and prosperity. Training Iraqi security forces to assume primary responsibility for security is essential. Continued progress in forming a unity Government and in fostering national reconciliation will contribute to the achievement of greater stability and security. The international community — particularly Iraq's neighbours, especially Syria and Iran — must do more to stop foreign fighters entering Iraq. Additionally, they should fulfil their international obligations under resolution 1546 (2004) to support the new Government of Iraq by ending material and financial support for individuals and groups that oppose the new, legitimate Iraqi Government.

The Multinational Force and the combined efforts of the Multinational Force and the Iraqi security forces continue to provide security for democracy to take root in Iraq. The Multinational Force remains committed to the tasks in hand and to ensuring success.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Istrabadi (Iraq): Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to commend your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the United States, for his tenure last month.

The past three months have been critical to Iraq's transition from dictatorship to a united, federal, pluralistic, constitutional democracy. The results of Iraq's elections were certified in the middle of last month. The elections were free, fair and transparent, and, in distinction to those of a year ago, all of Iraq's communities participated in them. Iraqis know that democracy is not a destination but a process, and an evolutionary process at that. We know that we are still at the very beginning of the process. Still, the next time a representative of Iraq sits in this Chamber to report on events unfolding there, he will do so — for the first time in five decades — as a representative of an elected Government operating under a permanent constitution.

Negotiations are now under way for the formation of a new Government. The negotiations are bound to take some more time, as the various parties explore the formation of a national unity Government. There is a sense among Iraq's political leadership that such a Government will likely help to improve the security climate in the country, as it will allow all of Iraq's various groupings — political, ethnic and confessional — to become enfranchised. My Government understands that that sense of enfranchisement is a vital necessity in further isolating those whose agenda is merely to interrupt the completion of the political transformation of the country. As a first step towards achieving the formation of the Government, it is expected that the parliament will be convened for its first session tomorrow.

With respect to security, the Iraqi police and security forces have assumed many of the functions previously performed exclusively by the multinational forces. Major checkpoints in the capital are controlled by Iraqis, and it is Iraqi forces that patrol the streets. Ministries and other Government offices are guarded and controlled by Iraqi units. Iraqi forces are also assuming an ever-increasing role in enforcement operations throughout the country. It is a matter of clear policy for us that effective Iraqi security and police forces be trained as quickly as possible so that Iraqis can assume all responsibility for Iraq's security needs, thus eventually obviating the need for the continued presence of the Multinational Force.

My Government believes that the economic development of Iraq must be an integral part of the political stabilization of the country. Iraq has too long been isolated from the world economy. To the extent that those who oppose Iraq's political development succeed in keeping Iraq so isolated, they will have accomplished a major strategic aim. We therefore call upon the world community to continue to engage in Iraq. We are grateful for the pledges made by many donor nations, but we call on them to redeem those pledges and transfer the pledged amounts.

Iraq will continue to need the active engagement of the United Nations as an Organization. To that end, we again ask for an increase in the number of staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) operating throughout Iraq in the three offices established for that purpose. We will need active UNAMI participation as the political process continues to unfold in the constitutional phase, as amendments are considered, and as laws enforcing constitutional provisions are drafted by the first parliament. In a very real sense, the work of reconstructing our political institutions is only now beginning, and the United Nations has much to offer us in that respect.

I must turn my attention to the ugly and cowardly turn which terrorism has taken in Iraq. Unfortunately, attacks on and around houses of worship, bearing the hallmarks of supporters of the previous regime, are not a new phenomenon, as terrorists have been employing the tactic since 2003. But while previous attacks targeted worshippers or individuals, late last month a new type of attack occurred: terrorists targeted the holy shrine in Samarra itself, a shrine holy to and honoured by all Muslims and, indeed, all Iraqis, regardless of faith. The purpose was not merely to destroy the building itself. The ultimate goal of the attack — and of attacks on other mosques throughout the country — was to foment a civil war along confessional lines, to pit Shia against Sunni. Yet Iraqis from across confessional, ethnic and political lines stand united in their horror and condemnation of such attacks, as they condemn attacks on all houses of worship. The people of Iraq overwhelmingly reject attempts by terrorists to incite sectarian conflict through such heinous tactics.

We are mindful of and grateful for the Security Council's repeated support of our people as they combat the scourge of terrorism. Not least among that

support was resolution 1618 (2005), in which the Council unreservedly condemned terrorism in Iraq. My Government believes that it is right and fitting for the Security Council to continue to condemn that barbarity without qualification or equivocation of any sort. Doing so demonstrates the unity of the civilized world and its determination to defeat the forces of terrorism, whether they are in New York, London, Beslan or Baghdad. In this respect, we are cognizant that resolution 1618 (2005) reaffirmed the duty of Member States in our region to undertake specific acts to prevent terrorism from being planned, funded or otherwise projected from their territories into Iraq. We renew the call on our neighbours to abide by those obligations.

The Secretary-General's report expends some effort reporting on the status of human rights in Iraq. Let me be clear: the Government of Iraq is committed to respect for human rights and for the rule of law, as it acknowledges that there is yet room for improvement in that area. My Government is determined to make those improvements, and it welcomes any constructive criticisms in this respect. At the same time, we note that the report does not take into account the extent to which the current security situation has contributed to the Government's inability fully to implement its human rights agenda. Moreover, the report should have made it plain that it regarded the terrorism extant in Iraq as itself constituting an unacceptable attack on fundamental human rights. The duties arising under international human rights and humanitarian law, after all, apply not only to Governments, but to all, universally.

It is appropriate to take note of those steps undertaken by the Government of Iraq to improve human rights practices in the country, notwithstanding the security situation.

First among them is the presence, for the first time in 46 years, of a vibrant and robust civil society sector with unfettered access to a variety of governmental agencies, including jails, prisons and courthouses. When allegations of abuse do arise, they are reported in the media, and, as the report itself acknowledges, they are investigated by Government authorities.

Second, there is now extensive training of police and security forces, including jailers and prison guards, in international human rights standards. The Ministry of Human Rights has been tasked with conducting such training, and it has created and publicized the existence of mechanisms for reporting and investigating alleged abuses.

Third, Iraq's new permanent constitution enshrines the principles of international human rights law, principles sacred to civilized peoples the world over. While there is still work to be done for us to reach the lofty standard to which we ourselves aspire, we have also accomplished much in the brief span of 21 months since the transfer of authority to a sovereign Government.

My Government warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's statement that it is time to normalize Iraq's relationship with the Security Council by lifting the barriers to Iraq's full reintegration into the community of nations. Those barriers and sanctions were first introduced when Iraq was governed by a rogue and lawless dictatorship that had attacked and occupied a fellow Member State. Those days are now behind us. My Government again asks the Security Council to review and rescind prior mandates imposed upon Iraq's previous regime, as they are no longer relevant.

Despite ongoing difficulties, for their genuine accomplishments, particularly on the political track, achieved under the most difficult circumstances imaginable, the Iraqi people have justly earned the admiration of freedom-loving peoples the world over. Yet I would be remiss if I reached the end of my remarks today without pausing to commend the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Ashraf Qazi, and the entire UNAMI staff for their tireless efforts on behalf of Iraq. I must also express the gratitude of my Government and that of the people of Iraq to the Security Council, and to each of its member States, since the liberation of my homeland from tyranny for the unwavering support we have received from this body in the difficult task we have undertaken. We look forward to working closely with the United Nations, as well as our friends in the region and beyond, to continue the vital work of rebuilding our country.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5387

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5387th meeting

Wednesday, 15 March 2006, 1 p.m.

New York

President	Mr. Mayoral	(Argentina)
Members	China	Mr. Guan Jin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Mrs. Wandel
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Haneda
	Peru	Mr. Gallardo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Bye
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Ms. Sanders

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2006/122)

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06-27204 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 1 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2006/122)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Somalia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mohamed (Somalia), took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/122, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council reaffirms all its previous statements and resolutions concerning the situation in Somalia, in particular the statements by its President of 14 July 2005 (S/PRST/2005/32) and 9 November 2005 (S/PRST/2005/54).

"The Security Council welcomes the report of the Secretary-General of 21 February 2006 (S/2006/122), and reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the situation in Somalia and its respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of Somalia, consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

"The Security Council commends the efforts of the President and the Speaker towards reconciliation and dialogue, particularly the signing, with the facilitation of the Government of Yemen, of the Aden Declaration on 5 January 2006, which culminated in the convening of the first session of the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) inside Somalia in Baidoa on 26 February 2006. The Council encourages all leaders and members of the Transitional Federation Institutions (TFIs) to continue their efforts towards inclusive dialogue and consensus-building within the framework of the TFIs and in accordance with the Transitional Federal Charter of the Somali Republic adopted in February 2004.

"The Security Council welcomes and supports the convening of the first session of the TFP and looks forward to sustained sessions of the TFP as Somali leaders seek to resolve their differences peacefully. The Council calls on the TFP to promote peace and reconciliation in its work towards implementing the Transitional Federal Charter and encourages the members of the TFP to use this opportunity to address key issues of national concern. In this regard, the Council urges the members of the TFIs to continue to organize their work in accordance with the Transitional Federal Charter, such as the formation of independent commissions and parliamentary committees, which will provide a framework for addressing the complex and divisive issues of the transitional period.

"The Security Council reiterates the urgent need for a rapid finalization of an agreed national security and stabilization plan, to include a comprehensive and verifiable ceasefire agreement, as well as plans for the restoration of public safety and security institutions and the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

"The Security Council reiterates its strong support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and calls upon all Member States to provide their full and active support in this regard.

"The Security Council remains seriously concerned over the continued intermittent fighting and armed violence, kidnapping and other use of force, particularly in recent incidents in the capital, Mogadishu, and other parts of Somalia, which have caused loss of life among innocent civilians and have the potential to undermine the current progress achieved by the leaders of the TFIs. The Council calls on all the parties to cease all hostilities and resolve their differences peacefully in the spirit of the Aden Declaration through the framework of the TFIs.

"The Security Council expresses its growing concern over the situation of 1.7 million Somalis in a state of humanitarian emergency or suffering from serious malnutrition, severe livelihood distress and the rising civil and food insecurity in parts of Southern Somalia. The Council urges all Somali leaders to ensure complete and unhindered humanitarian access, as well as provide guarantees for the safety and security of the humanitarian aid workers in Somalia. The Council emphasizes the importance of the international commitment and coordinated support for improving the humanitarian situation.

"The Security Council commends the neighbouring countries, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU), the League of Arab States, the European Union (EU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and concerned Member States for their keen interest and persistent efforts in support of the peace, reconciliation and recovery process in Somalia. The Council encourages them to continue to use their influence in support of the TFIs, in particular to help them in their efforts to move ahead on the key issues of security and national reconciliation.

"The Security Council welcomes the AU Summit decision of 25 January 2006 on Somalia, including the possible deployment of an IGAD Peace Support Mission to Somalia (IGASOM), to be followed by an AU Peace Support Mission. In the event that a national security and stabilization plan includes the need for a peace support mission, the Council reiterates that it expects the AU and IGAD to work out a detailed mission plan in close coordination with and with the broad consensus of the TFIs and consistent with the national security and stabilization plan. The Council stands ready to consider an exemption to the arms embargo imposed against Somalia by Security Council resolution 733 (1992) on the basis of such a mission plan.

"The Security Council takes note of resolution A.979 (24) adopted on 23 November 2005 at the twenty-fourth session of the International Maritime Organization biennial Assembly, concerning the increasing incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters off the coast of Somalia. The Council encourages Member States whose naval vessels and military aircraft operate in international waters and airspace adjacent to the coast of Somalia to be vigilant to any incident of piracy therein and to take appropriate action to protect merchant shipping, in particular the transportation of humanitarian aid, against any such act, in line with relevant international law. In this regard, the Council welcomes the communiqué of the IGAD Council of Ministers' meeting in Jawhar on 29 November 2005, which decided to coordinate its strategies and action plans to face this common challenge in close collaboration with the international community. The Council further urges cooperation among all States, particularly regional States, and active prosecution of piracy offences.

"The Security Council takes note of the annual report of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia (S/2005/813) and the mid-term briefing of the Monitoring Group on Somalia to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992). The Council condemns the increased inflow of weapons into Somalia and the continuous violations of the United Nations arms embargo and further reminds all States of their obligations to comply fully with the measures imposed by resolution 733 (1992) and urges them to take all necessary steps to hold violators accountable. Continued violations of these measures prevent the establishment of a stable and secure environment and undermine the efforts of those who seek to establish peace in Somalia.

"The Security Council reaffirms its full support to the peace process in Somalia and

welcomes the commitment of the United Nations to assist in this regard. In this connection, the Council encourages the TFIs and the international partners to reinvigorate the Coordination and Monitoring Committee in the interest of a more effective international engagement in the peace, reconciliation and recovery process in Somalia."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2006/11.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5388

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5388th meeting

Thursday, 16 March 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mayoral	(Argentina)
Members:	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Thomson
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Sanders

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 14 March 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/161)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-27326 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 14 March 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/161)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Assaker (Lebanon) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Boutros Assaker, Acting Secretary-General of the Lebanese Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Serge Brammertz, Commissioner of the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Brammertz to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them photocopies of a letter dated 14 March 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the third report of the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission, which was prepared pursuant to resolutions 1595 (2005), 1636 (2005) and 1644 (2005). The letter and its enclosure will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2006/161.

I now give the floor to Mr. Serge Brammertz, Commissioner of the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission.

Mr. Brammertz: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to introduce the third report of the United Nations Independent International Investigation Commission. It provides an update on the progress made in investigating the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and 22 other persons and gives an initial account of the technical assistance extended to the Lebanese authorities' investigations of 14 other cases of alleged terrorist acts. The report also details recent developments in securing very much needed cooperation from Syria.

I assumed my responsibilities as the new Commissioner eight weeks ago. My first priority upon arrival was to address the many concurrent challenges that confronted, and are still confronting, the Commission, namely, its resource needs, ensuring continuity, making progress in the investigation, providing technical assistance to the Lebanese authorities, making progress in obtaining Syria's cooperation and, most of all, managing the very high level of expectations within Lebanon, and outside, that those tasks will be completed quickly.

With regard to organizational needs, when I arrived in Beirut only 6 investigators were left, out of a budgeted number of 48. Most of the departures had occurred since September, in anticipation of the expiration of the Commission's mandate in December. As a result, while working to ensure continuity in the investigation, we are rebuilding the investigative team. As of today, the Commission has 16 staff members in the investigation division, with 21 vacancies remaining.

Finding qualified people with expertise in highly complex criminal and terrorism investigations is a serious ongoing problem. Good people have jobs, are

not available for short-term assignments or are not being released by their organizations. While the mandate's extension for six months has given us some more stability, 15 June is not far in the future. If we do not act now, and if we do not get the medium-term stability we need for our work, the Commission will find itself in a similar situation in just three months from now. We urgently need the Council's support and that of other Member States in quickly identifying and making available qualified investigators.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Interpol for the help extended to us on short notice. Discussions are ongoing with Interpol concerning the creation of a roster of experienced investigators and criminal analysts for international deployment. Such a roster would benefit not only the Commission but also any future international inquiry or investigation.

Ensuring continuity in the investigation has been a critical priority since my arrival. Yet it is important to recognize that we are in a new phase of the Commission's work. During its initial three-month mandate, the Commission naturally focused on quickly collecting information in support of, and for further use by, the national judicial authorities. Since the Council's adoption of resolution 1644 (2005), and with the possibility of a tribunal of an international character looming, a more systematic and methodological approach will be essential. We have to make sure that this investigation is conducted with the utmost professionalism and in adherence to recognized standards of international criminal law. Only then will it be accepted and thus provide the basis for a judicial process — possibly before such a tribunal.

In fact, professionalism is reflected not only in the Commission's investment in highly qualified staff but also in its tools. Adequate investigation capacity requires appropriate information and case management, the analytical capability and methodology necessary for a case of such high complexity, legal advice that ensures adherence to the recognized standards of law, readily available in-house expertise in forensics, and adequate capacity to address witness-protection needs.

With that more systematic approach we have made further progress in the investigation into the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and 22 others. We have advanced our understanding of the crime, its circumstances and modus operandi. We have developed new lines of inquiry and pursued and further evaluated existing leads and discarded others. I am optimistic that that progress will provide critical links in identifying and holding accountable those responsible for the crime, at all levels of the chain of command.

While I understand the strong public interest in learning about further details on the status of certain lines of inquiry, we have agreed with the Prosecutor General of Lebanon not to publicly discuss such details at this stage of the proceedings. I firmly believe that that policy is necessary to safeguard the integrity of the ongoing investigation and to avoid revealing our strategy. Bearing in mind the possible establishment of a tribunal of an international character, it is critical that we respect the rights of the defence and not jeopardize the security of witnesses or other sensitive sources.

We have also made progress in implementing the request to provide technical assistance to the Lebanese authorities in their investigations of 14 other cases of a possible terrorist nature. We have completed our first round of evaluations of all cases, and agreed with the Prosecutor General and the investigation judges on what assistance is needed. We have also started to provide, on a case-by-case basis, practical assistance in such areas as forensics and analytical and legal expertise.

However, structural problems within Lebanese law enforcement and judicial systems in coping with the demands of those cases have been apparent. More cooperation and communication among the different Lebanese agencies is necessary, as are more specialized and investigative capability and forensic expertise. If we succeed in addressing those problems swiftly, the investigations into the additional 14 cases could provide valuable links and commonalities among these cases and with the assassination of Rafik Hariri and 22 others.

Investing in technical assistance to the relevant Lebanese authorities is therefore an investment in the Commission's investigation. However, the Commission will not be able to address the broader capacity problems alone. It will be for the international community at large to support the Lebanese authorities

through more in-depth needs assessments and targeted long-term assistance programmes.

Improved and timely cooperation from Syria will be a critical factor in continuing the Commission's work successfully. It was therefore of the utmost importance to achieve clarity with the Syrian authorities about the legal framework for cooperation and access to information, sites and Syrian citizens. By addressing those issues, the Commission can now focus its efforts on the substance of its requests for cooperation from Syria. The understanding reached with the Syrian Foreign Ministry on the practical modalities of our cooperation should be seen against that backdrop. Our expectations vis-à-vis the Syrian authorities are high in that respect. The Commission has already prepared several new requests for cooperation to the Syrian Foreign Ministry. The coming weeks will prove whether our requirements will be fulfilled and our cautious optimism was justified. I will report to the Council on the progress made in that respect in my next report, or earlier if necessary.

Let me conclude by making some general observations.

The management of expectations remains a key challenge. Expectations are very high, sometimes unrealistically so, and differ depending on one's perspective. Therefore, the Commission has to strike a balance between the understandable interest for transparency in its work, on the one hand, and the need to protect the confidentiality of its findings, on the other. At this stage, transparency for us can only mean reporting on working methods and professional standards applied, and revealing in general terms the progress made in the investigation. Confidentiality, on the other hand, requires that we not disclose information on the investigative strategy or harm the rights of the accused. That would inevitably have a negative impact on a later case in court.

We cannot predict the outcome of the investigation. We also cannot guarantee that the investigation will be finalized in a few months, but we will work to ensure that the best possible investigative result is achieved. That will be done by combining professional skills with analytical and forensic expertise, while respecting internationally recognized standards.

Before closing, let me take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Prosecutor General of Lebanon and his staff for the excellent interaction between his office and the Commission. We are aware of the challenges the judiciary is facing in his country and hope that the presence of the Commission in Beirut will contribute to strengthening the Lebanese judicial system.

Let me also express my gratitude to the security and military forces ensuring in Beirut our security around the clock. They are doing an excellent job, and I would like to thank the media in Lebanon and the wider region for respecting the confidentiality of the investigation and thereby facilitating its conduct.

Finally, I wish to thank the Security Council for its support and continued interest in this very important matter.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Brammertz for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Boutros Assaker, Acting Secretary-General of the Lebanese Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants.

Mr. Assaker (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council at a time of sensitive and difficult issues.

I also wish to commend the efforts of your predecessor, and to thank the Security Council and the Secretary-General for their efforts and support following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and his companions.

By the same token, I pay tribute to the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIIC), established by the Council, for its ongoing efforts under the leadership of Mr. Serge Brammertz, whose earnest and high professionalism we appreciate.

We have read with close attention the third report of the UNIIC and welcome the strenuous efforts that were made in preparing it. We also welcome the close cooperation between the Commission and the Lebanese authorities, which will continue in the framework of the Council's resolution. We view with hope the contents of the report reflecting the cooperation of all parties and we call for the continued development of

such cooperation in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The Security Council is meeting today just as certain decisions of the Lebanese national dialogue have been announced, reflecting the consensus achieved among the Lebanese parties. Those decisions reiterate the resolve of the Lebanese people and their leaders to discover the real truth behind the assassination of Rafik Hariri and his companions, to achieve justice, and to identify and demarcate the remaining Lebanese occupied territories in accordance with the measures and principles adopted and accepted by the United Nations. The participants also expressed their attachment to the establishment of strong relations and parity between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic based on mutual respect for sovereignty and independence.

Revealing the truth behind the murder of Prime Minister Hariri is a priority for Lebanon and the world. All Lebanese also agree to and demand the establishment of an international tribunal to try all those involved in that terrorist crime. The tribunal will, in turn, promote consensus and internal stability in Lebanon.

All are aware that the issue is beginning to assume legal form following the consultative visits and the understanding reached in prior weeks between the authorities concerned within the Secretariat and the Lebanese judicial delegation. The Government of Lebanon hopes that its request for the creation of the tribunal will be favourably received and supported by the Security Council and anticipates that a final formulation regarding the structure and operation of the tribunal will be reached as soon as possible.

Meeting the demands of the Lebanese people to punish those involved in this enormous terrorist crime, whoever they may be and wherever they are to be found, and to unveil the truth behind other murders and attempted assassinations that preceded and followed it — from the attempt against Minister Marwan Hamadi to the assassination of the martyr Gebran Tueni — will strengthen stability in Lebanon and throughout the region. Furthermore, those demands seek the fulfilment of justice and will deter the perpetrators from repeating such terrorist acts, especially in the light of Lebanon's suffering over the years from frequent attempted and successful assassinations. Discovering the truth and holding the perpetrators accountable will do a great service to the future of Lebanon, a country which Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and his companions loved and died for.

The truth will promote the independence and sovereignty of our country. It will also help the Lebanese Government, with the support of its people, to strengthen the foundations of the capable, strong and just State to which all Lebanon aspires.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me, Sir, to congratulate your friendly country and you personally on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. I wish you every success in conducting the Council's deliberations this month.

By the same token, I welcome the presence of Mr. Serge Brammertz, Commissioner of the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIIC), to present his report. We take note of the contents of the reports and its references to Syria's efforts to cooperate with the Commission in the period under review. I wish to reiterate the assurance of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic that it will continue its cooperation with the Investigation Commission, since we are keen on revealing the truth behind the crime of assassinating the late former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

The report before the Council moves the investigation of the criminal assassination of Mr. Hariri to a new stage, and we hope that this phase will help identify the parties responsible for that crime, as well as for other crimes that occurred in Lebanon. In this regard, we would like to reiterate what we have said on previous occasions, that the most dangerous thing the investigation has faced is the fact that some parties have encroached upon the investigation with a view to reaching preconceived, unsubstantiated evidence.

Permit me to touch briefly on the report before the Council. I wish to make some general observations on it, without delving into substantive details, so as to avoid prejudicing the character of the investigation, which we hope will be impartial, objective, independent and free of political interference.

First, the report refers to the joint understandings between Syria and the Investigation Commission on the legal framework and practical cooperation machinery between the two sides in the framework of

Syria's response to the Commission's requests for assistance. We would like to stress that such joint understandings take into consideration Syrian legal and judiciary jurisdiction and observe the requirements of national sovereignty.

Secondly, Syria has cooperated continuously and completely with the Commission since it began its work. In this connection, the Special Judiciary Commission set up in Syria is ready to cooperate with the International Commission and to respond to all requests presented by it. Syria is of the view that the ability of the Syrian Judiciary Commission to respond to the requests for assistance depends to a great extent on the clarity and accuracy of the requests from UNIIIC and on the need for information relating to some aspects of the investigation concerning Syria.

Thirdly, the report refers to cooperation between Syria and the Commission in terms of Syria's response to the requests made by the Commission in submitting information and documents. We would like to emphasize before this Council that Syria continues to make efforts in this connection.

Fourthly, it has become clear that a number of witnesses appearing before the Commission made false allegations in order to mislead the investigation and to lead it to conclusions based on known political biases. We hope that the Commission will avoid any such tendency under the new leadership.

Fifthly, we hope that the Commission will follow the new leads referred to in the current report. We would like to emphasize that Council resolution 1595 (2005) calls upon all States to cooperate with the Commission to help identify the truth regarding the assassination of the late Rafik Hariri.

Sixthly, we note with satisfaction that the confidentiality of the investigation has been handled very professionally. We welcome this, and we emphasize the need for this professionalism to continue.

In conclusion, we would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to the gravity of attempts by some circles to utilize the cooperation between Syria and UNIIIC to abuse Syria's intentions in order to achieve special goals. We would like to state that our cooperation is based on revealing the unassailable truth, this being part and parcel of our interests.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5389

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5389th meeting

Friday, 17 March 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President	Mr. Mayoral	(Argentina)
Members	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sabliere
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-27491 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Pursuant to the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I invite the representative of Liberia to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, was escorted to a seat at the Security Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a statement by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia.

President Johnson-Sirleaf (Liberia): It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this body. My presence here is in recognition of the critical role played by the United Nations in restoring Liberia to its rightful place in the comity of peaceful nations. Allow me therefore to seize this opportunity to pay a solemn tribute and to express our deepest gratitude to the United Nations; to this body, the Security Council; and to the families of all the peacekeepers who have made important sacrifices on behalf of my country.

In providing support through its resolutions and through the statements made by the various Presidents of the Security Council during our crisis, and in defining the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the Security Council has earned itself a laudable place in the history of Liberia. We shall remain ever grateful for that manifestation of support for and identification with a founding Member of the United Nations at its time of greatest need.

The activities of the United Nations in Liberia over the years have endeared this great Organization that promotes international peace and security to our people.

It is for these reasons that we also seize this opportunity to thank the United Nations and the Secretary-General, as well as his Special Representative to Liberia, and all who work under the umbrella of the United Nations and its agencies, for helping to stabilize the situation in Liberia and for giving our people renewed hope for the future.

I also want to express our deepest appreciation for the concerted efforts of the international community, beginning with our neighbours in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) subregion, the African Union, our partners in the European Union and the European Commission, as well as our traditional friends, such as the United States, together with other countries that are contributing troops and police for the smooth operation of UNMIL.

My inauguration on 16 January as the democratically elected President of Liberia opened up many possibilities, and I believe that this portends a brighter chapter in our country's history.

However, we also realize that there are formidable challenges ahead as we set about consolidating our hard-won peace. But with the assurances of the United Nations and of other partners, we are determined to complete the reintegration of our war-affected population, namely the refugees, the internally displaced and ex-combatants, and quickly begin to address the most basic needs of our people.

In order to meet these challenges, we have elaborated a phased plan of action that defines our immediate priorities for the first 150 days of my administration, as a prelude to a national strategy that will take us forward over the medium term.

Our strategy for peacebuilding is constructed on four pillars, focusing on security, the rule of law and governance, economic revitalization and basic services, and infrastructure. To spearhead and coordinate this effort, I have established a Liberia Reconstruction and Development Committee, which I will lead personally.

Our major partners, including the United Nations, are fully involved in the workings of this Committee.

It is imperative that we provide tangible assurances to the people of Liberia that democracy will bring change for the better. They must see early improvements in health and education and economic opportunity, starting with jobs. I will need the support of the United Nations and the international community to make the changes necessary to achieve these important national goals. On our part, we commit to continue collaboration with our international partners in the implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme. At the same time, I intend to ensure the implementation of a capacity-building programme that would enhance Liberian ownership of the programme, as well as to transfer critical skills to Liberians, to strengthen national capacity on a long-term basis.

At the moment, we are putting in place mechanisms that will enhance transparency in governance, consistent with the requirements for the lifting of timber and diamond sanctions. As a first measure, I have rendered null and void forestry concessions, as recommended by the Forestry Concessions Review Committee. My Government is meeting most of the requirements for implementing the Kimberley Process, and I hope that this will lead to an early lifting of the ban on diamond exports. New measures have been enacted to enhance national revenue flows, so that we can depend more on ourselves in the process of national reconstruction and development. My Government has also extended the life of the Governance Reform Commission and expanded its mandate to, among other things, spearhead the formulation of a vigorous anti-corruption action plan, as well as to lead in the implementation of a code of conduct governing the behaviour of officials of the three branches of Government. I have already mandated that all ministers make a public declaration of personal assets.

I am aware that Liberia, as a nation, must confront the legacy of the past to enable us to go forward in the future. The conflict touched virtually every family and every individual in our land. We are determined to address issues from our painful past, including the question of impunity, as well as the imperatives of national reconciliation, so that the country can move ahead. For this reason, we have established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as mandated by the Accra Peace Accord. We have also reconstituted our Supreme Court to start the long-needed reform of the judiciary branch of Government.

An issue of major concern to our people and the nations of the subregion has to do with a case of former President Charles Taylor, who is presently in exile in Nigeria. I have asked the President of Nigeria to consult with colleagues in the subregion and in the international community on the resolution of this issue, in conformity with the requirements of the United Nations and the international community. I have also asked that, as we bring this matter to closure, we ensure that in any proceedings there is an environment that protects the fundamental human rights of all, including the accused. In rising to all these challenges, our nation will continue to count on the unstinting assistance of the United Nations and the international community.

Liberia is still a fragile State. Our peace remains fragile. Our armed forces are being reconstituted, and the restructuring of our police and security forces is not yet complete. In view of these realities, I urge the Council to maintain its support for the United Nations Mission in Liberia. We must consolidate the gains achieved during the transition of the last two years so that the enormous investment made by the international community in the peace and stability of Liberia and the region is not put at risk. We must be assured that the United Nations will ensure the safety of our people and the stability of the State if the African leadership decides to bring the Taylor matter to successful closure.

I also seek the urgent contributions of donor countries and organizations for our recovery and development agenda, including debt relief. Many countries have already contributed significantly, especially in the areas of humanitarian aid and security sector reform. If we are to achieve the sustainable development of Liberia that will guarantee continued peace and stability, it is important that we accelerate the transition from humanitarian to development assistance, so that we can tackle the fundamental problems of reducing poverty and making significant progress in the achievement of the other Millennium Development Goals.

Let me conclude by once again thanking the Security Council for its tremendous support to the Liberian people. I am convinced that, working closely

together, we shall help Liberia turn its back on a tragic era and put our country firmly on the path to recovery, to development and to enduring peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia. I think the Council's applause attests to the support of the United Nations, not only in the past, but also for the future of democracy in Liberia.

I shall now call on Council members who would like to address President Johnson-Sirleaf.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): It is with great pleasure that my delegation joins others in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia. We equally appreciate her statement and share many of the aspirations and concerns that have been raised, especially with regard to the formidable challenges of national reconstruction and reconciliation. Indeed, Liberia has come a long way in the quest for peace, and its people deserve commendation for their resolve in recent years to stay the course. That was clearly demonstrated in the successful completion of the two-year transition process as set out under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement drawn up at Accra.

Naturally, in this new climate of hope, expectations are high, not least among the most vulnerable segments of the population, who continue to bear the brunt of the acute humanitarian and socio-economic crisis of a war-shattered economy.

Undoubtedly, President Johnson-Sirleaf has an onerous responsibility to discharge, since her beloved country, Liberia, is, in many respects, starting from scratch on many fronts. In that regard, we wish to note that the country's security situation remains fragile, not to mention the other serious challenges — particularly the urgent need for the consolidation of State authority and the firm establishment of the rule of law and good governance throughout the country. These constitute the foundation on which a strong economy can be built in order to tackle expeditiously the formidable humanitarian and socio-economic problems that President Johnson-Sirleaf's Government faces.

We recognize that the Government and the people of Liberia bear primary responsibility for the reconstruction and development of their country. Nonetheless, the magnitude and complexity of the challenges facing Liberia call for the continued support and cooperation of the international community and of the United Nations system as a whole, especially during this critical period of transition from war to peace. That will enable the leaders to build on the gains made so far and will stimulate the rapid economic growth that is vital for sound nation-building.

We expect the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to contribute greatly towards that end. Therefore its continued presence in the country — at least in the foreseeable future — is necessary. Let us learn from history and not betray the people of Liberia again in their hour of need. In the light of the goodwill that Liberia currently enjoys on the international plane, we hope that, sooner rather than later, the country will benefit from the assistance and support of the newly established Peacebuilding Commission.

It is also with humility that I deem it appropriate to remind President Johnson-Sirleaf that, because she is Africa's first female President, history has thrust upon her the additional burden of being a trailblazer for the numerous women and girls of Africa in their quest for empowerment through active and meaningful participation in national politics, including in leadership roles. We are confident that, given her sterling qualities and pedigree, she will live up to their expectations and set an example worthy of emulation.

I need not dwell at length on the long history of excellent relations between our two countries. Suffice it to say that Ghana will continue to use its tenure of office in this organ as well as its membership of our two common institutions — the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union — to support the implementation and attainment of President Johnson-Sirleaf's laudable vision. Her success is our success, and we wish her well.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure and a great honour for my delegation to welcome Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia. Today, the Council has the privilege of honouring the first woman democratically elected as a head of State in Africa.

Indeed, the election of Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf is a symbol that reflects the African continent's gradual and solid rooting in modernity, which some have called Africa's renaissance. This election represents a living expression of the influence of African women on the future of our societies. It is also a reflection of the end

of the 14-year-long civil war that completely destroyed this country — a country that was one of the hopes of our continent. Above all, the election confirms a country's ability to emerge from war once there is determination on the part of competent authorities, steadfast involvement of the African community and mobilization of international partners.

The success of the electoral process is due mainly to the Liberian people, whose maturity we should commend, as well as all those actors in political and social life who have made a positive contribution to the management of this process with a sense of responsibility and loyalty to the Republic. I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant for the effectiveness with which he led Liberia's National Transitional Government.

The new President of Liberia was elected primarily for her unanimously recognized merits and for the hopes raised by her political agenda, which she has just presented to us admirably. In fact, the President is a competent individual who has held senior ministerial posts in her country and senior posts in several international institutions, including, inter alia, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. She has known the agony of war and even of exile. For us, this is an opportunity to express our admiration for her exceptional journey and her ceaseless fight for justice and dignity.

President Johnson-Sirleaf was elected not because she is a woman, but for her political commitment and her professional experience — guarantees of success in a context of major challenges following a long and terrible civil war. My delegation is convinced that her great experience and the high esteem in which she is held at the international level will help her to fulfil her mission of leading the Liberian nation towards long-term peace and stability. The President also embodies the hope of aimless young people, who for too long have been immersed in violence, that they can now commit themselves to turning away from armed groups and becoming involved in the development process.

The events experienced by Liberia in recent years shed light on the problems faced by developing countries, particularly in Africa: those of promoting peace and security, which are prerequisites for any kind of development. It has been a tragic experience that should challenge us all. First, it challenges all citizens, particularly the political class, regarding their contribution to the search for long-term solutions. Such solutions can come only if people cooperate and listen to one another, but in a calm atmosphere, refusing to use violence, defy the laws of the Republic or become consumed by partisan passions.

That is why we commend President Johnson-Sirleaf's willingness to reach out to her former opponents in order to work together and, above all, to help give priority to the national reconciliation that is essential to the stability and development of the beautiful country of Liberia.

My delegation supports Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf in her plea to establish a truth and reconciliation commission, as has been done in several other African countries. Such an initiative would undoubtedly help to heal the wounds of Liberians and to build national unity, which is essential for the country's reconstruction.

If it is to deal with the many challenges facing it, the Liberian Government must, inter alia, restructure the security sector; improve economic governance; consolidate the rule of law, human rights protection and State authority throughout the country; and re-establish essential services. My delegation thus calls upon the international community to provide greater long-term assistance to the Liberian Government — beginning with maintaining the United Nations Mission in Liberia, as the President just requested — so that it can consolidate its authority, begin the necessary structural reforms and provide basic services to its people.

I conclude by expressing once again to the President of Liberia our warm congratulations and our best wishes for success in carrying out her high responsibilities as the head of her country. The vibrant and warm tribute paid to her by her peers at the African Union summit in Khartoum in January spoke eloquently of the trust that she enjoys in Africa and of the hopes placed in her to rehabilitate her country.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): We welcome and congratulate Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf on her election as President of the Republic of Liberia. Her assumption of the leadership of Liberia is the dawning of a new era for Africa and for Liberia after more than a decade of violent conflict.

While celebrating her victory, we are mindful of the major challenges facing her new Administration. First and foremost among those is to lay a stable foundation for a new Liberia emerging from civil wars, anarchy and suffering — which has affected every family in Liberia. A firm and stable foundation will be built by addressing a number of priorities. Among them are working towards national reconciliation, strengthening security, building administrative and judicial institutions, restoring law and order, creating an effective programme for the reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants, fighting impunity and rebuilding mutual trust and national esteem among the Liberian people. In that regard, we are encouraged by President Johnson-Sirleaf's resolve to address the long-standing issue of Charles Taylor.

We equally strongly support President Johnson-Sirleaf's commitment to promote national reconciliation. We therefore welcome the inauguration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which will provide an important forum for establishing a record of past abuses and determining how to deal with them. Over the years of civil conflict, Liberia produced one of the highest ratios of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa. The return of displaced persons ought to be integral to the reconstruction and reconciliation strategies.

The international community has to remain focused to assist Liberia in its priority areas of political stabilization, economic and social reconstruction and good governance.

Lastly, we pay tribute to the men and women serving with the United Nations and to the members of the Economic Community of West African States for their tireless efforts and sacrifices to help Liberia emerge from its 15-year-old crisis, which has finally come to an end.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): I wish the members of the Council a happy Saint Patrick's Day. I am sure all members are familiar with the famous American saying: Today we are all Irish.

We warmly welcome President Johnson-Sirleaf to New York and to the United States. We also join others in thanking her for coming here to address the Security Council.

For some years now we, together with the international community, have paid very careful attention to the challenges of restoring peace and stability in Liberia. Given the severity of its troubles, we have monitored events in Liberia with concern and apprehension. We have also done so with hope and anticipation that Liberia would prove to be the model of a nation beset with overwhelming problems that can and will recover.

There is no question that Liberia's problems remain enormous. But we are encouraged by signs that Liberia is on the path of recovery and reform. All of us want to be part of that success story. If committed to a reformist path, Liberia can feel confident that the international community will be there to help. For our part, the United States pledges our support to assist with Liberia's reconstruction.

The elections that took place in Liberia last fall seem likely to be marked by history as a critical milestone on the road to recovery. We congratulate President Johnson-Sirleaf on her victory. In her short time in office, we have been impressed with the courage and determination she has already shown in addressing Liberia's challenges, especially in such areas as economic and civil service reform.

On Wednesday, President Johnson-Sirleaf addressed a joint session of the United States Congress, and our Congressmen were most impressed: they gave her a standing ovation. I only regret that in our more solemn and restrained practices in the Security Council, we could not do the same for her here today. By all accounts it was her expressed commitment to create a better future for Liberia that so inspired her audience in our Congress. The United States shares that hope. We encourage the President to do all she can to sustain Liberia's forward momentum of recent months. We are confident that the President's Government will engage in sound financial management and full transparency, which are essential to spur that momentum.

We also commend President Johnson-Sirleaf's commitments to reforming the diamond and timber sectors. We look forward to the day that Liberia fulfils the requirements for the lifting of sanctions. As many know, the United States is assisting Liberia's efforts to reconstruct its forest sector on a transparent and sustainable basis. We applaud President Johnson-Sirleaf's adoption of an executive order cancelling existing forest concessions and establishing a forest-reform monitoring committee. We hope our optimism

is warranted and that remaining reforms will be in place so that sanctions can be lifted as soon as possible.

Lastly, the United States was encouraged about reports that President Johnson-Sirleaf and Nigerian President Obasanjo are discussing the issue of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who faces multiple charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. We support the efforts of President Johnson-Sirleaf and President Obasanjo and other African leaders to bring Charles Taylor to justice.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I thank President Johnson-Sirleaf for honouring the Security Council with her presence here today, and for her stirring presentation this morning. Allow me also to welcome her back to the United Nations, which she served with such distinction earlier. I also wish to congratulate her on being Africa's first female leader. As our colleague from Ghana has said, what she has blazed is a path of inspiration for many, not just in Liberia but across the continent. Unfortunately, that adds to her many responsibilities. That much is clear, because if we know one thing about conflict, it is that women are the ones who suffer most and that the empowerment of women — and what we set out in the Council in resolution 1325 (2000) — is really very crucial. We therefore wish her every success in all possible directions.

Those who were on the Security Council's mission to Liberia in June 2003 need no reminding of the problems that Liberia faces. The President faces the challenge of rebuilding her country after years of conflict, an enormous task in every sense. But I think that all of us want to send today a message of clear support, not just of the Council but of the entire United Nations, for the reconstruction of Liberia. In terms of its security, the humanitarian and economic development and especially the political processes, we stand foursquare with Liberia. Let there be no doubt at all in that regard. Liberia deserves it, Africa and West Africa need it, and the United Nations must be able to demonstrate success for what it has already invested and what more it should invest in that country.

President Johnson-Sirleaf has set out the steps that she has already taken. We can only congratulate her on that and admire the rapidity with which she has done many of those things, especially in relation, if I may say so, to Government contracts and the whole question of the forestry concessions. I think we heard what she said about the Kimberly Process. That is very much key to lifting the sanctions on diamonds. I think it is incumbent upon us now to review the sanctions as quickly as possible, taking into account the steps that the President has taken.

But she has also shown, if I may say so, particular courage in her approach to the Nigerian President, the question of the return of Charles Taylor to face justice and the challenges against him, a case of the gravest of human rights abuses and war crimes. The United Kingdom is strongly of the view that he should be facing those charges, ending impunity, in the Special Court in Sierra Leone at the earliest possible opportunity. We applaud President Johnson-Sirleaf for the stand she has taken there, and I think we and, again, all parts of the United Nations have to give her every support in what is not an easy issue. We understand that, but I hope very much that the regional leaders will rally to what she is trying to do.

As she has said, the situation in Liberia remains fragile. The security situation is difficult. The urgent need to handle ex-combatants and to put in place their disarmament, demobilization and, above all, reintegration is very difficult, as is the training of the Liberian national police. All that has to be accelerated. A number of our countries are trying to help bilaterally, but the onus is clear.

But UNMIL cannot cut and run. President Johnson-Sirleaf said that she needs UNMIL to continue. I think our commitment must be clear — it must stay for as long as it is necessary to do the job and until the indigenous security forces, police and military, can take on that responsibility. That is the pledge that, I think, we have to make very clear to the President today. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has also, with the other forces in West Africa, to take account of all the regional aspects so that we are not actually transferring problems from one country to another, but are working on the widest possible basis. UNMIL, I am sure, will be able to stay and will cope with the situation. That requires, too, the quick-reaction force component, and the effort of our Irish and Swedish colleagues there is particularly important.

May I end simply by saying that we congratulate President Johnson-Sirleaf and admire what she is

doing. We look forward to what she will do. We wish her every success, and I think we have to underline the commitment of the Council and the United Nations to seeing it through with her to the end she wants for her people.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, let me once again congratulate Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf on her election to the presidency of Liberia. I also thank her for her important statement.

In recent times, the new administration of Liberia has taken a series of reform measures in all areas in its tireless effort towards economic reconstruction and national rehabilitation, and has achieved positive progress. That represents a victory for the Liberian people and the United Nations. As a friend of Liberia, the Chinese Government and people are sincerely pleased by that success. We also believe that, under the leadership of President Johnson-Sirleaf, all the parties of Liberia will unite and achieve the lasting peace and economic revitalization of their country in rapid course.

China has always supported and appreciated the positive role played by the United Nations, and especially the United Nations Mission in Liberia, in maintaining the stability of Liberia and in development. Following the establishment of the new administration, the United Nations and the international community should continue to assist the new Government in its efforts towards national reconciliation. China will always support and participate in the work in that field.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I, too, would like warmly to welcome President Johnson-Sirleaf to the Council. Her presence among us today as the democratically elected President of Liberia is proof that, after a long night's travel, morning has finally broken in her country.

My message today is one of full support for the new Liberian Government. We are determined to work with it to consolidate peace and democratic processes in Liberia. It is our clear position that the United Nations Mission in Liberia should continue its robust presence in the foreseeable future in order to guarantee a secure and stable environment as the Government strives to implement urgently needed reforms and to tackle issues of impunity and justice.

Denmark appreciates the fact that important and bold steps have already been taken in key reform areas, including financial management, anti-corruption, and the cancellation of Government contracts and forestry concessions. The proper implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme will help sustain those new policies.

Both in my national capacity and as Chairman of the sanctions Committee, I welcome the President's resolve to work towards meeting the conditions for terminating the Council's measures on timber and diamonds. I assure her that we share the same interest in terminating those measures as soon as possible when the conditions are met and the revenues from those sectors will benefit the Liberian people. If the current reform momentum is kept up, that goal should be within short reach.

The sanctions Committee stands ready to cooperate with the Government on how, alongside Member States, it might assist President Johnson-Sirleaf in expediting the efforts needed to meet the conditions, as well as on how the Committee might assist her in the implementation of the assets freeze imposed by Security Council resolution 1532 (2004).

Let me finally welcome the President's request to African partners to consult on the resolution of the Taylor issue, in conformity with the requirements of the United Nations and the international community. We know that it has been a difficult decision, but also a courageous and timely one. We hope that the consultations will be brought to a speedy conclusion, as bringing an end to impunity is key to long-term stability in Sierra Leone, Liberia and, indeed, in the whole subregion.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): I join in warmly welcoming President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to this Chamber. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I wish to extend once again our sincere congratulations to the President of the Republic of Liberia on her inauguration.

We trust that, in meeting the many daunting challenges Liberia faces in overcoming the legacies of the decade-long civil war, the Government and people of Liberia will be united under the leadership of the President and will make every effort to consolidate the hard-won peace and move steadfastly towards its recovery, reconstruction, national reconciliation and a new nation-building effort.

To support that national effort, the international community must respond, not only with good will, but also by mobilizing substantial support for and assistance to Liberia. For its part, the Security Council will have to address such matters as the future activities of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the lifting of the sanctions and the issue of impunity, in close consultation with the new Government.

As the special envoy of Prime Minister Koizumi, Mr. Shintaro Ito, already conveyed in January, Japan, as a friend of Liberia and of Africa, will be pleased to join in accelerated and sustained international cooperation for Liberia as it embarks on a new journey. We will be working in partnership and solidarity with the Government and people of Liberia, including for community-based development, the reintegration of child soldiers, anti-proliferation of small arms, and other reconstruction and development projects. It is the hope of my Government that friendship between our two countries will be strengthened through close dialogue and cooperation with the President, the Government and the people of Liberia.

We wish the President and people of Liberia well with their success and we wish them a better future.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): We are very pleased to welcome President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to the Council. Slovakia would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Liberia and its people on the successful conclusion of the transitional process, and most notably on the peaceful and democratic conduct of the elections.

We applaud Liberia's progress in recent months. The country, which was perceived as one of the world's most fragile and vulnerable just a few moths ago, is today being praised as an example of a successful transition.

However, we want to underline the fact that democratic elections are just the first step, though extremely important. To make the positive developments sustainable and stable, further decisions and measures to strengthen democratic institutions and good governance are needed. The major challenges were very clearly described in President Johnson-Sirleaf's statement and we have been impressed indeed by her courage and resolution during the first weeks of her presidency to implement important steps to further the process of stabilization and reconciliation in Liberia.

Slovakia considers ending impunity to be a major challenge and imperative in all conflicts. We believe that surrendering Mr. Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone would be a major step for Liberia on its way towards lasting peace and national reconciliation. In that context, Slovakia welcomes the announcement of the beginning of discussions between the Governments of Liberia and Nigeria that could bring the issue of Mr. Charles Taylor to a timely resolution.

In conclusion, for our part, we would like to express our full support for Liberia on its new way towards stability, security and prosperity. We believe Liberia will continue to be a much-needed good example in the extremely volatile region of West Africa. Slovakia is ready to support the legitimate expectations of that country here in the Security Council, as well as in other international forums.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for the Security Council to welcome Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf today. The presence of the Liberian President is the focal point of our meeting and highlights its importance.

In various ways, she embodies hope reborn — first, because she is the first woman to be elected head of State in Africa in full respect for democratic principles, and secondly, because her election marks the end of a civil war that ravaged her country and destabilized the entire subregion. Her election demonstrates that the crises on the continent — even when they achieve extreme intensity — are not necessarily fatal. It confirms that, even in such extremity, an African State can emerge from civil war when its leaders are determined, when the African community is resolutely involved, and when its international partners, beginning with the Security Council, assume their full responsibilities. Finally, her determination, competence and pragmatism are the best guarantors for Liberia's recovery.

We are all well aware of the fact that the President's job is immense. It involves rebuilding the nation, restoring basic public services, ensuring respect for the rules of good governance, eradicating corruption, achieving success in the national reconciliation process, and fighting impunity. In that respect, my country welcomes the ongoing discussions with President Obasanjo on sending Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone as soon as possible.

Along with those considerable challenges, there is also a fragile and unstable regional environment, as reflected in Liberia's neighbour, Côte d'Ivoire, and in particular the western part of that country that borders Liberia. The stability of the entire subregion should be a constant concern and a common objective for us all.

President Johnson-Sirleaf can count on the support of France and, as she heard our colleagues say, on the Security Council to assist her in her promising efforts. We are at her side and her success will also be the success of the people of Liberia.

Mr. De Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru welcomes Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, and congratulates her on having restored democracy in her country and on her election as the first woman President of an African country.

Her election as President of Liberia is a demonstration of the progress that can be achieved when the international community works in unison in the context of respect for human rights and democracy. Her democratic election in a post-conflict situation is of far-reaching importance, not just to Liberia, but also to all of Africa and the entire international community.

I congratulate her once again on having established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and restructured her country's Supreme Court. We believe that the success of democracy in Liberia commits us to ensuring the viability of her country. The holding of elections should be just one phase in a wide-ranging programme or compact for the rebuilding of Liberia, involving cooperation on security, the rule of law, governance and economic recovery. In the economic sphere, the sanctions need to be lifted, much more economic assistance must be forthcoming, debts forgiven, and foreign investment attracted so as to promote trade in Liberia.

Peru supports the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the presence of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 31 March 2007, without prejudice to an assessment of further extensions, as circumstances may warrant.

In conclusion, I wish to say that Peru once again reaffirms its strongest support for Liberia and will continue to participate by providing military personnel to UNMIL.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I wish to welcome President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman in Liberia to assume such a senior post following free and democratic elections.

The Government of National Unity has achieved truly significant success in strengthening the country's unity and overcoming the consequences of the lengthy conflict there. However, much remains to be done to ensure the irreversibility of achievements in the peace process, to rebuild the war-torn and shattered country, to reconstruct the economy and infrastructure and to restore and consolidate legitimacy, law and order.

Without effective assistance on the part of the international community, including the donor countries and the development partners, and without the firm political support of the Security Council, it will be extremely difficult to resolve those issues, although the fate of the country is naturally in the hands of the Liberians themselves.

In conclusion, I should like to express our full support for the efforts of the new Government of Liberia and for Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf personally. We are certain that, in the near future, life in Liberia will return to normal and that the country will embark on the path of sustainable development and prosperity.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to welcome the presence of Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf here today. We are pleased indeed at the success story of the Security Council and the international community in the restoration of peace to West Africa. It is our hope that Liberia will be an example to be followed in that region with regard to peace processes.

We welcome the presence among us of the African continent's first elected woman President and the first Liberian head of State to have been elected since the civil war ended in 2003. Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf was elected through fair and transparent elections that put an end to the transition period in Liberia. She is indeed a living example of the important role of women in the processes of political decision-making, peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

The devastation wrought by the destructive civil war in that country makes it incumbent upon us to consider ways and means of assisting the Liberian people, who have suffered so much in the recent past. In that regard, we call on the donor countries to support the efforts of Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf in

combating corruption and in the reconstruction of the infrastructure in Liberia, which has gone beyond the stage of peacekeeping to that of peacebuilding.

The State of Qatar appreciates the efforts of the United Nations and of the international community in Liberia, in particular those of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, whose role has been vital in the establishment of peace in Liberia, which will have a positive impact on the West African region as a whole. I should like to wish every success to President Johnson-Sirleaf and to her friendly country.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): Let me join others in welcoming Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to New York and in expressing our warmest congratulations to her on her assumption of the presidency of Liberia.

The recent elections held there and her victory signal the successful completion of the transitional process and a turning point in the country's history, as well as a symbol and a vindication of the sacrifices, the struggle and the contributions of all Liberian and other African women.

President Johnson-Sirleaf's determination to promote national reconciliation, political inclusion, sustainable development and economic governance reforms, as well as her qualifications and international credentials, guarantee the success of her efforts.

We would like also to commend the progress made in implementing the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme and hope to see Liberia soon assuming full ownership of it.

The Government of Liberia has undertaken the tremendous and difficult task of rebuilding and uniting the country, but in doing so it is also seeking justice and making efforts to address impunity. In that regard, we welcome the statement made earlier this week that the Governments of Liberia and of Nigeria are determined and committed to arriving at a solution to the issue involving Mr. Charles Taylor and his transfer to the Special Court of Sierra Leone, while at the same time guaranteeing his rights under international law.

Moreover, we welcome the inauguration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, since we believe that through its work justice will be served and those who committed atrocities held accountable. The international community should and will stand by Liberia in this critical phase and provide all necessary support in that regard.

Greece, with all the means at its disposal, will do its share. We believe that the reconstruction of the country should be one of the first issues that the Peacebuilding Commission should deal with as soon as it becomes operational. We now have reason to hope that the dream of the country will become reality.

We wish President Johnson-Sirleaf every success in her difficult mission.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a brief statement in my national capacity.

At the outset, Madam President, I wish to join in expressing satisfaction, as other members of the Council have done, at your presence in our midst as you address the Council as Africa's first woman head of State.

After so many years of struggle and tribulation, we believe that you represent hope for the people of Liberia, for the region and the international community, which so ardently desires to see your country embark on the path of peace and sustainable development.

We would like to highlight the achievements registered by your Government over the past two months. In that context, I would underscore in particular the efforts made to combat corruption and the launching of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate past human rights abuses.

We also agree with you, Madam President, that the situation in Liberia is still fragile and that much remains to be done in order to bring about peace and security. For that reason, we support the maintenance of the UNMIL mission as a precautionary measure until circumstances dictate otherwise.

As you have said, reconciliation cannot be achieved solely by legislation, nor can it be achieved merely through institutions. It needs to be driven by the efforts and commitment of all members of society. We believe, however, that, on the path to national unity and reconciliation, justice should not be sacrificed nor impunity enshrined. The victims of the grave violations of human rights that took place over so many years in Liberia deserve justice.

We in the Council welcome the talks that you are holding with the Government of Nigeria and the Governments of other neighbouring countries at the

highest level to arrive at a just and exemplary solution to the issue involving former President Charles Taylor.

We know that your task is a very difficult one. There is much that you must do, from resolving economic problems, including the problem of debt — given the difficult conditions that very often are set by international credit organizations — to giving a fresh start to a society divided and impoverished by civil war. You can count on our support and on our ardent wishes for success, but, most importantly, you can count on the support of your people. Your success will be the success of all Liberians and of Africa as a whole.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I invite Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, to take the floor if she wishes to do so.

President Johnson-Sirleaf: I just once again would like to say thank you on behalf of the Liberian people for the support we have received from all of the nations represented at this table, from our neighbouring countries and from our African brothers and sisters in helping us make this transition from war to peace. I thank all of those countries that have provided peacekeeping troops and that have enabled us to reach this point of progress. I thank the many of you around this room, and the countries you represent, for supporting our development effort that has enabled us to embark upon these processes of change and transformation. And I thank you for the kind expression of continuing support that I have received from all of you this morning.

I pledge to you, on behalf of the Liberian people, that we will continue to take those measures that will enable us to pursue peace, stability and development, not only in Liberia, but also in our subregion and in Africa.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before adjourning the meeting, I take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Security Council, our appreciation to the President of Liberia for having come to address the Council. I think with our applause the Council members wish her every success in her efforts to set Liberia on a clear course towards sustainable peace and development.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5390

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5390th meeting

Monday, 20 March 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mayoral	(Argentina)
Members:	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Peru	Mr. Maurtua
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Small arms

Report of the Secretary-General on small arms (S/2006/109)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-27602 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Small arms

Report of the Secretary-General on small arms (S/2006/109)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Australia, Austria, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, Fiji, Guatemala, Guyana, Indonesia, Nigeria, Norway, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Ukraine and Uruguay, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Officer-in-Charge of the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

It is so decided.

I invite Ms. Hoppe to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/109, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on small arms.

I welcome Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Officer-in-Charge of the Department for Disarmament Affairs. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Hoppe: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the Council the report of the Secretary-General on small arms, document S/2006/109, which is submitted pursuant to the request made by the President of the Security Council in his statement of 17 February 2005 (S/PRST/2005/7). This is the third of the follow-up reports on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on small arms, contained in document S/2002/1053 of 20 September 2002, on ways and means in which the Security Council could contribute to dealing with the question of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in situations under its consideration.

Those recommendations covered four main topics: first, the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; secondly, Security Council-mandated sanctions and arms embargoes; thirdly, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; and fourthly, confidence-building measures.

As in previous years, the present report was prepared by the Department for Disarmament Affairs in close consultation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Criminal Police Organization, which contributed information on the initiatives undertaken in their respective areas of competence.

The Security Council's annual open debate on small arms is an important forum within the United Nations for the consideration of the issue of small arms and light weapons. It underscores the recognition by the Council of the threat posed by the illicit trade in and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons to international peace and security. We have all witnessed the concrete manifestations of that threat in most of the recent conflicts where small arms and light weapons have been used to cause widespread human suffering, along with social, political and economic instability in the regions directly involved in those

conflicts, as well as the countries neighbouring such areas.

The present report underscores continuing progress made in important areas addressed in the recommendations of the report of 2002.

An important step forward in the global struggle against the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons is the recent adoption by the General Assembly of a politically binding international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. That instrument contains key provisions aimed at facilitating the work of law enforcement officials as they attempt to trace illicit weapons. The challenge now is to take the necessary steps to ensure the full implementation of that instrument. In that context, serious consideration should be given to international cooperation and assistance to States that so request in developing the appropriate tools, technical expertise and infrastructure necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the instrument.

The report highlights, as an important development, the entry into force of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The realization of that instrument's potential as an effective tool in the efforts to prevent and combat transnational organized crime depends on its wide acceptance by States. The Council may thus wish to encourage States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Protocol.

An encouraging sign of progress is the increased focus on understanding the link between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illicit exploitation of natural resources and on measures to help sever such links.

In terms of actions to prevent the diversion of small arms and light weapons to the illicit market, the decision of the General Assembly, at its sixtieth session, to establish a group of governmental experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons is an important step in the right direction. The Group will commence its work in November of this year, with two more sessions to be held in the course of the first half of 2007.

The report also underscores the fact that, despite the progress made so far, more needs to be done in order to fully implement some of the recommendations being considered by the Council today. In that regard, I would like to point out the need to support States in their efforts to build the necessary capacity to adopt measures aimed at further improving the effectiveness of arms embargoes imposed by the Council. Such support could include technical assistance for improved monitoring of national air spaces and land and maritime borders, as well as the development of means to identify and prosecute those that violate arms embargoes. I would also like to highlight the need to intensify efforts to systematically integrate longer-term small arms and light weapons control measures in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in post-conflict situations.

I also wish to emphasize the recent achievements of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, particularly the development of a strategic framework and an internet database, and the initiatives undertaken to raise awareness of the mechanism among United Nations offices in the field. Those initiatives are intended to strengthen the mechanism's coordinating role within the United Nations system, as well as its capacity to better respond to requests for assistance from Member States. The sustainability of those efforts can be secured only with the support of Member States.

In June, the United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small arms and Light Weapons will be convened. The intensity of the debates during the session of the Preparatory Committee for the conference, which was held in January of this year, confirmed, on the one hand, that States remain as committed as they were in 2001 to tackling the challenges posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. On the other hand, the wide diversity of views expressed regarding a number of issues and possible approaches to furthering the question of small arms and light weapons on the international agenda is symptomatic of the complexity of the challenges posed by the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons and its multifaceted nature.

The Secretary-General is encouraged by the continued efforts of the Security Council to address the challenges posed by illicit small arms and light weapons in the context of matters under the Council's consideration. I am confident that today's meeting will enhance the determination of Member States in their efforts to seek concrete measures to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, as well as to identify the best approaches to addressing the areas of continued concern.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Hoppe for her briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I should like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to our friend Mr. Oscar Maúrtua, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru.

Mr. Maúrtua (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to convey the greetings of the Government of Peru and to congratulate you, Sir, and the Argentine delegation on the efficient manner in which you have presided over the Security Council this month. I should also like to thank you for your initiative of convening an open debate on small arms, a most significant issue for the international community and one that is directly related to the primary responsibility of the Council, the maintenance of international peace and security.

We also wish to thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Officer-in-Charge of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, for her very valuable briefing on this most important matter.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group.

The fact that I, as Peru's Minister for Foreign Affairs, am present at this debate reflects the great importance that my country attaches to its responsibility as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Peru shares the vision expressed by the heads of State or Government at the September 2005 World Summit that development, peace, security and human rights are interrelated and that they reinforce one another.

Peru's general position in this important body is based on an integral and preventive conception of international peace and security, in accordance with international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That involves not only the absence of war and dealing with traditional threats; we must also consolidate policies aimed at confronting the new threats and challenges facing humanity. Poverty and hunger, corruption, terrorism, transnational organized crime, climate change and many other issues are directly linked to the viability of our States and to the daily lives of their citizens, who must be the focus of our attention.

From our perspective, the gravity of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is based on its impact on international security, including, of course, public safety. That in turn affects the consolidation of the principles that sustain international law and the structure of the modern State, including the defence of democratic institutions, the rule of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. But those are not the only concerns. No less serious is the risk represented by these weapons when they are linked to problems such as drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism.

Today, no one can deny the disastrous consequences of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Its proliferation in the various regions of the world helps to destabilize entire countries, to increase the intensity and duration of armed conflicts and to undermine the provision of humanitarian assistance.

The horrifying statistics related to this issue are known by everyone. The Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva indicates that small arms and light weapons are responsible for more than half a million deaths each year. Of those, 300,000 are attributable to armed conflicts, and their consequences in terms of human lives have been more lethal than those of nuclear weapons. In the 1990s alone, small arms and light weapons played a leading role in 47 out of the 49 main armed conflicts.

Here, I must point out that the harmful effects of small arms and light weapons are found not only in zones of armed conflict, but also in many cities. The availability of small arms in large cities causes no

fewer than 200,000 deaths a year and strengthens organized crime. In economic terms, the authorized trade is estimated at $4 billion annually. The illicit trade, for its part, amounts to 25 per cent of that figure. Moreover, it is estimated that more than 640 million small arms and light weapons are currently in circulation and that 8 million new arms enter the market each year. Although some of those weapons are exported legally, they end up on the black market and become a source of income for armed gangs and terrorists.

In December 2005, the General Assembly adopted the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. That was a positive step that Peru wishes to highlight. However, I must reiterate that, because of its implications and importance, Peru fought hard to ensure that the Instrument would have legally binding status. We hope that that will happen, and we will work to that end.

In general, we will work tirelessly to ensure the success of the next review conference. We hope that it will make substantive progress in a number of areas for which the 2001 Action Plan opened the way. The vice-chairmanship to be held by Peru, representing the Latin American and Caribbean region, is proof of our commitment.

With regard to armed conflicts, the Security Council must continue its efforts to achieve effective control over the embargo regimes and to strengthen the process of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating former combatants in conflict and post-conflict situations. The problem of the lack of effective control over embargo regimes is due to the fact that many States lack the capacity to control their territories, particularly their border areas. If a State does not control its territory, the conditions are such that embargoes cannot be intensified. In that connection, the work of the Security Council must focus on strengthening the State, with the support of peacekeeping missions, to ensure efficient control of its borders and throughout the country in general.

Concerning the process of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating former combatants in post-conflict situations, the Security Council must bear in mind that States cannot carry out such actions without adequate financial resources. Many States are unable to pay their armed forces and police, which is why their demobilization and reintegration is very difficult. The Council must find ways to increase, by means of donor countries, the financial resources necessary to support these activities within the framework of peacekeeping operations.

In the context of the international efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Peru took an important step by ratifying the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

We have also promulgated the amnesty and regularization law, which encourages citizens to surrender their legal or illegal weapons to the relevant authorities. With the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, we are continuing the process of mass destruction of firearms and holding seminars aimed at the country's political, legal and academic authorities. In addition, new legislation is being elaborated to incorporate the commitments undertaken by Peru through international instruments. We hope to establish in the near future a national commission responsible for coordinating actions and centralizing all national efforts in that area.

In that context, the Government of Peru has reinforced the public security system. Through Law 28397, on amnesty and regularization of the possession of firearms and ammunition, we have been able to eliminate approximately 7,000 weapons in the past few years. On 10 January 2006 alone, approximately 2,500 weapons were destroyed. Moreover, within the framework of this law, on 13 March 2006 a total of approximately 10,000 weapons were surrendered or regularized in accordance with the control norms.

In that connection, I reiterate today, at the highest political level and in the context of this important debate — which brings together not only Security Council members but also all United Nations Member States — the firm commitment of the Government of Peru to the fight against this grave scourge, which threatens public safety and helps to strengthen drug trafficking and terrorism. That aspect constitutes an integral part of our domestic strategy aimed at reaching higher levels of political, economic, social and cultural development that will be sustainable in the long run.

Lastly, allow me to say that my country believes that the Council must strengthen its position on this issue through the adoption of a resolution reflecting its concern and requiring States to adopt concrete measures involving the full observance of arms embargoes as a basis for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Peru for the kind words he addressed to me and to my delegation.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative to hold an open debate on this important question, which has a critical impact on peace and stability in many countries, particularly those in which central Governments have lost control over their internal affairs.

Small arms and light weapons are no small matter, despite their description, because they are a source of disturbance and instability. As Governments have been unable to control or trace them, they remain a scourge and a cause of turmoil.

Allow me also to thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Officer-in-Charge for the Department for Disarmament Affairs, for having presented the third report of the Secretary-General, which he submitted as part of a series of reports dealing with the illegal traffic in small arms and light weapons. The report covers the period from January to December 2005.

In his previous report, the Secretary-General had made 12 core recommendations on the best ways and means of dealing with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. I will address some of the recommendations which we believe to be important and of concern to the international community in its fight against that dangerous trade.

The first recommendation was for the Security Council to call upon the Member States to support efforts aimed at developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. In that context, the international community, represented by the United Nations, has made strenuous and commendable efforts. Those efforts led to a consensus on a draft international instrument of a political character that included a number of provisions concerning requirements for the marking of small arms and light weapons; record-keeping; and cooperation in the tracing of illegal small arms and light weapons.

My delegation followed closely, and participated in, the deliberations of the Working Group established by the General Assembly. We would have liked the Group to have succeeded in adopting a legally binding instrument obligating those countries and Governments that export and import small arms and light weapons to commit legally and morally to its provisions. However, the different points of view and conflicting interests prevented the conclusion of a legally binding instrument. Nevertheless, we welcome the results achieved so far and consider them a first step which, we hope, will ultimately lead to reconciling differences and giving international interests precedence over narrow national ones. We hope also that this political instrument will be progressively developed into a legally binding one that will provide the means for effective control of illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

The second recommendation highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General under consideration is a call for Member States to use, as required, and to provide technical and financial support to, the Interpol Weapons and Explosives Tracing System.

To ensure success for the international community's efforts to track the movement of illicit small arms and light weapons, we need a database and a central information system accessible to Member States that can be used, when and as needed, to share and exchange information. Interpol possesses such capabilities, which ultimately makes it one of the lead agencies in tracking and communicating information on the movement of firearms. We therefore stress the need to support that organization and to provide it with the necessary technical and financial assistance. The international community would be serving its own interests by understanding Interpol's mission, believing in it and providing it with information about both the legitimate and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as soon as such information becomes readily available.

In that regard, we also support the third recommendation contained in the report, which encourages Member States that are in a position to do so to assist the Secretariat in establishing the small arms advisory service, on the basis of extra-budgetary resources. Such assistance would allow the Secretariat

to continue to carry out meetings in the field with a view to raising awareness of, and improving the coordination of activities related to the threat posed by illicit small arms.

Control of the trade in small arms and light weapons has many advantages, the most important of which is preventing armed conflicts and strengthening the foundations of peace and stability. The sooner we succeed in mustering genuine political will, the better we can control that illicit trade, which will, in turn, minimize the outbreak of armed conflict. We therefore believe that it is extremely important to continue to coordinate efforts among Member States at the bilateral, multilateral and regional levels.

Coordination of efforts in the Arab region, to which we belong, is satisfactory. Meetings of Arab focal points entrusted with monitoring and tracking the movements of small arms and light weapons are held periodically, with a view to exchanging expertise and following up on regional and international developments in the field. Furthermore, the Arab member States provide the secretariat of the League of Arab States with the texts of laws and legislations regulating small arms, which the secretariat of the League of Member States then incorporates into a database accessible to member States. That information-sharing mechanism will allow members of the League of Arab States to keep abreast of the achievements realized and to benefit from the expertise available in the Arab region.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the international community will succeed in safeguarding the international priorities of disarmament, eliminating nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, upholding the right to self-defence, and addressing the root causes of armed conflicts.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Mission of Argentina for its efforts in drafting, and organizing consultations on, the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Hoppe, Officer-in-Charge of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing.

The excessive accumulation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have exacerbated warfare in certain countries and regions, disrupted peace processes and the smooth operation of post-conflict reconstruction, and bolstered terrorism, drug trafficking and other criminal activities, with negative political, economic and social repercussions. In recent years, the United Nations and the international community have focused on the issue of small arms and light weapons, have made many efforts and have achieved some progress in seeking solutions to that problem.

The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects were concluded in 2001. They have provided a legal and policy basis for the solution of the question of small arms and light weapons. In 2003 and 2005, two United Nations biannual meetings on the implementation of the Programme of Action were successful in further enhancing the comprehensive implementation of the Programme. The International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, concluded in 2005, has demonstrated the international community's political will and determination to fight the illicit problem of small arms and light weapons. In addition, various international and regional seminars on small arms and light weapons have played an important role in forging international consensus and in increasing the exchange of experience and information.

The United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action will be held in New York from 26 June to 7 July this year. That meeting will mark another milestone in combating the illicit traffic in small arms. We hope that the international community will use that opportunity to help the meeting produce substantial results in the following areas. First, it should further clarify that States bear the primary responsibility for combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons so as to prompt them to enhance their capacity and institution-building accordingly, strengthen the management and control of small arms and light

weapons, and prevent the outflow of such weapons to illegal channels.

Secondly, it should emphasize the implementation of Programme of Action-related follow-up actions, including effectively implementing the International Instrument on the marking and tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons and initiating in a timely manner the work of the group of governmental experts on combating the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons.

Thirdly, the conference will be an opportunity to adopt further specific measures, strengthen international coordination and cooperation, and give full play to the lead role of the United Nations.

Fourthly, it should continue to encourage the international community actively to help the countries concerned to develop their economy, eradicate poverty, social injustice and other hidden security hazards, and to achieve peace, stability and development, thus removing the root causes of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We are glad to note that the issue of small arms and light weapons has received the full attention of the Security Council. Several open debates have been held and a number of presidential statements adopted. At the same time, the Security Council has stressed the importance of the small arms and light weapons issue when reviewing such questions as the protection of civilians, women and children in armed conflict. That has played an important role in effectively reducing illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and enhancing regional peace and stability.

China supports the Security Council as it continues to play an important role on the issue of small arms and light weapons, pursuant to its mandate. In addressing that issue, the Council should coordinate with other United Nations bodies so as to complement and promote each other's work.

The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to combating the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. We have taken an active part in the international endeavour in that area. In recent years, China has adopted a series of specific measures in domestic legislation, law enforcement, capacity-building and institution-building. We have earnestly implemented the Programme of Action. At the same time, we have actively participated in international exchanges and cooperation by holding international seminars, providing assistance to countries and regions concerned within our capabilities, and keeping regular operational links with the concerned departments of other countries and international organizations. We are ready to continue to take part in the international endeavour against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in a vigorous and constructive manner.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): May I begin by thanking you, Sir, and your delegation for proposing this debate, welcoming in particular the presence and contribution of the Foreign Minister of Peru. May I also thank Ms. Hoppe for her briefing. The United Kingdom fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the Austrian Ambassador on behalf of the European Union.

The United Kingdom warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's recent report on small arms and light weapons. Coming in the run up to the 2006 review conference of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, the report is a timely reminder of the scale of the menace posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which particularly affect regions of conflict and the developing world.

The menace of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is an issue of particular concern to us all. The widespread availability of those weapons in many regions of the world is a major source of insecurity and poverty. Nowhere is that more evident than across large parts of Africa. By fuelling conflict, crime and terrorism, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons undermines peace and greatly hinders development. The British Government is committed to reducing the proliferation of those weapons, the threat they pose and the damage they cause. We focus our efforts on three critical and related areas: first, strengthening controls on the supply of small arms and light weapons; secondly, reducing the availability of weapons; and thirdly, addressing the demand for weapons.

We recognize that those problems are complex and inter-related; they require concerted action between States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society at all levels, from the local to the global. That is why the United Kingdom is a firm supporter of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in

Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The United Kingdom calls on all States to fully implement that Programme of Action.

This year's United Nations Programme of Action review conference presents a vital opportunity to improve efforts to tackle the negative impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation. At January's preparatory committee of the review conference, there was consensus among participating States that the United Nations Programme of Action, although not yet fully implemented, is the key starting point for further action on small arms and light weapons.

We believe that United Nations efforts to control those weapons have to be intensified if we want to alleviate the serious impact of their proliferation on conflict, development and human rights. In doing so, we should make best use of the review conference. The conference should focus on crucial areas where significant obstacles to full implementation persist. We believe that those areas include marking and tracing, brokering regulations, transfer controls, and the integration of small arms measures into development assistance.

The United Kingdom would also like to draw attention to the initiative for a treaty on the trade in conventional arms, or the arms trade treaty. That is a separate initiative from current small arms and light weapons work, but would reinforce its objectives. Such a treaty would include legally binding standards for transfers of all conventional arms, including heavy weapons and small arms and light weapons. We believe that there is a strong security, development, humanitarian and moral case for such a treaty, and call on all States to support the early agreement to the start of a United Nations-based process to take that work forward.

The threat of small arms and light weapons is real and relevant to the mandate of the Security Council. We welcome the initiative to propose a draft resolution on that issue at this time. We believe that a resolution would serve several purposes: to complement the report of the Secretary-General; to demonstrate our commitment to tackling all the threats posed by the illicit trade; and, ultimately, to advance our shared goal of improving the international effort through the United Nations Programme of Action in order to save lives and to prevent and resolve conflict. We hope that the negotiations, which are well advanced, can soon be brought to a conclusion.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): We join in welcoming the Foreign Minister of Peru. We also thank Ms. Hoppe for presenting the report of the Secretary-General.

The United Republic of Tanzania welcomes the continuing interest of the Security Council in the challenges posed by illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Small arms present one of the severe problems facing Africa, especially our region — the Great Lakes region.

Since the start of international efforts to address small arms problems, Tanzania has been a strong advocate of developing realistic and practical measures designed to address the specific needs and capacities of each situation and region. We see the Security Council as having a special role in this effort, for conflicts attract arms, whether legal or illegal. While we must double our efforts to curb the flow of arms, the prevention of conflicts would significantly curtail the demand for small and illicit arms.

On the part of the countries of the Great Lakes region, the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region places the problem of the proliferation of illicit arms and light weapons among the most urgent that need to be tackled. The signatories pledged to promote common policies and to put an end to the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons and, in that regard, to harmonize and ensure existing agreements and mechanisms. As a result, we view the Programme of Action adopted by United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the various presidential statements by the Council that have sought to bring greater international attention to and action on the menace caused by small arms and light weapons, as crucial components of our efforts.

These efforts have borne results in the form of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol on Small Arms as clear testimony of the importance that the Great Lakes countries attach to the problems posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In keeping with the Programme of Action, these efforts and actions need to be supported.

We recognize that differences exist with regard to the appropriateness of binding norms and standards for small arms and lights weapons. In our view, when States have established international norms on nuclear non-proliferation and adopted treaties banning chemical and biological weapons and anti-personnel mines, it is only right that we should work toward a negotiated, legally binding instrument that establishes a stringent and verifiable regime to render illicit trade much more difficult.

We also recognize that the Security Council cannot seek a role greater than that prescribed in its mandate. However, it cannot afford to remain aloof when its intensive efforts in conflict prevention or in peacekeeping are undermined by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Presidential statements that brought little change in the conduct of actors on the ground require a more determined resolve to act. In our view, such resolve and action would best be served by a universal, binding framework on small arms and light weapons.

In spite of the absence of a stronger global framework for arresting the destabilizing effects of small arms and light weapons, much can be achieved if the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report are implemented. As it is, it seems that little in that direction has been achieved. The fact that present proposals in the report are a reiteration of past recommendations illustrates a lack of progress in many aspects. The Council needs to see how it can help progress in those elements of the proposals that bear on its mandate.

We are mindful that the Second Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes is due to take place in Nairobi later this year. It will have an important dimension in support of our subregional initiative on small arms and light weapons. It will be a seminal complement to the United Nations Programme of Action, as well as to an issue that preoccupies the Security Council. We should therefore collectively support the Conference as a vehicle for achieving our desired goals in combating illicit small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting and for providing this opportunity to discuss the third report of the Secretary-General on initiatives taken to implement the 12 recommendations on how the Security Council could help resolve the matter of the illicit trade in small arms. The Officer-in-Charge of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, gave us a very good briefing, which indicates that significant progress has been made in the implementation of certain recommendations.

However, given the threat that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to pose for the most vulnerable populations around the world, we must acknowledge that much remains to be done. Indeed, the number of illicit small arms and light weapons in circulation and the number of victims of those weapons are still far too high. In Africa, undoubtedly one of the regions most affected by such proliferation, they are commonly called weapons of mass destruction because of their devastating effects in many conflict areas and because of the high number of victims they claim on a daily basis, and the suffering and other consequences they impose on civilian populations. These arms are also a permanent threat to peacekeepers, as in the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for several peacekeepers have lost their lives in recent months.

Illicit small arms and light weapons thus continue to pose a major challenge to peace. Controlling this scourge requires a collective effort on the part of the international community, for, because of the close links between these weapons, terrorism and transnational organized crime, no country is immune to its threat.

In the 12 recommendations under consideration, it is clear that the most important progress achieved since the adoption of the 2001 Programme of Action is undoubtedly the adoption of the international instrument related to tracing and identifying small arms and light weapons. That instrument calls for new commitments that must be respected, especially when it comes to provisions related to identification, tracing and international cooperation. As the Secretary-General said in his report, the effectiveness and relevance of this instrument will depend on the commitment of Member States to fully implement it.

My country, like certain other Member States, while recognizing the progress resulting from the adoption of this instrument, regrets the fact it is not of a binding character and does not have provisions concerning ammunition. Indeed, it is ammunition that allows the continued use of illicit small arms and light weapons. Without a supply of ammunition, those small arms and light weapons could not continue to wreak

such deplorable havoc. The Security Council should therefore focus greater attention to this matter of ammunition.

Interpol has an important role to play in implementing the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We welcome the progress already made, with the participation of that organization, in the development of an international system to track arms and explosives. We hope for greater cooperation between the United Nations and Interpol in the area of appropriate legal and technical aspects. Only rigorous control of imports and exports will make it possible to effectively combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Violations of arms embargoes continue to promote the continuation of conflict situations. Such violations must therefore be resolutely condemned. My delegation therefore supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General with regard to the implementation of Security Council sanctions resolutions, especially those that impose arms embargoes on countries or regions emerging from armed conflict, experiencing actual armed conflict or where there is a threat of such conflict. My delegation likewise supports the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to detect instances of intentional violations.

In addition, peacekeeping missions and sanctions committees established by the Security Council should be empowered to make requests with regard to identifying arms and ammunition discovered in the course of their operations or collected in the context of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme. Export control policies, including provisions pertaining to requiring end-user certificates, merit our further consideration. In that regard, we must promote regional support for the strengthening of controls over international transfers of small arms.

The Congo favours strengthening inter-State cooperation on various levels. We therefore participate actively in the implementation of the relevant mechanism at the subregional level in the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. In the same vein, we reaffirm the relevance of the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which was adopted on 1 December 2000 by the African Ministerial Conference on the Illicit Proliferation, Movement and Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as the June 2004 Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa.

Respect for the commitments undertaken in the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects therefore requires a collective effort. Those involved in illicit trafficking often take advantage of shortcomings in legislation, differences between States and the weaknesses of some States to manage their own territory. In that regard, priority should be given to strengthening national operational capacities in various areas, including in developing legislation, training law enforcement officers, border control, stockpile management, maintaining registries and public awareness. That requires extending assistance to the weaker States.

The Congo welcomes the fact that the report of the Secretary-General on small arms emphasizes, among other things, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in countries emerging from conflict. It should be clearly underscored that disarmament can be effective and lasting only if former combatants are reintegrated into society and able to regain their social status and find employment. We therefore support the idea of including in the mandate of peacekeeping operations specific provisions pertaining to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Our national experience has shown that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes require significant resources, which cannot always be mobilized at the national level. With the assistance of various bilateral and multilateral partners, the Government of the Congo is currently developing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for former combatants. The objective of those programmes is to curb the illicit circulation of the almost 42,000 firearms on our territory and to reintegrate more than 25,000 combatants into civilian life, so as to strengthen peace. On the basis of that experience, we would like to see greater involvement on the part of international financial institutions in the implementation of DDR programmes.

With regard to recommendation 6 in of the report of the Secretary-General in particular, my delegation believes we should pay particular attention to the links between trafficking in illicit small arms and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Reports by the Expert Panel on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and by the Panel of Experts on Liberia, to name but two, have pointed to the role played by the illicit exploitation of natural resources in the continuation of conflicts, the financing of military expenditures of rebel forces, the recruitment of mercenaries and so on. We would like the Council to adopt stronger measures in that regard, including with regard to the implementation and monitoring of targeted sanctions, in order to sever the link between the illicit trade in small arms and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

In conclusion, for the international community, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is the very basis for combating the proliferation of such weapons. We hope that, by its actions, the Council will contribute to the preparations for the review conference scheduled for July, which will be an opportunity to gauge the progress made in this field.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. The fact that the Council is seized of the issue of small arms and light weapons for the sixth consecutive year is indicative of the seriousness of the matter and of the importance that the Council attaches to it.

I wish to welcome the presence among us of the Foreign Minister of Peru. I also thank Ms. Hoppe, Officer-in-Charge of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, for her excellent introduction of the report of the Secretary-General, which was clear and comprehensive.

Greece associates itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the Permanent Representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. However, I wish to stress the following points.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has contributed enormously to the unlimited proliferation of such weapons. It is estimated that over 640 million small arms and light weapons exist worldwide. Several million of those are illegally possessed, either by transnational criminal organizations or by non-State actors. That uncontrolled propagation of small arms and light weapons results in a total of 500,000 victims annually and constitutes a significant threat to international peace and security. We have witnessed their destabilizing effects on States and, at times, even entire regions. They significantly contribute to the intensification of conflicts, obstruct relief programmes, undermine peace initiatives, exacerbate human suffering and hamper economic development.

Among all the tools of war, small arms and light weapons are the most widespread. They are easily available and nearly out of control. In order to check the problem, in 2001 the United Nations adopted the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Progress has been made in some aspects of the Programme, whereas in other areas the situation is still stagnant. We therefore expect that a full evaluation of its implementation will be made during the forthcoming first review conference on the Programme of Action.

The General Assembly's adoption in 2005 of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons constitutes a significant step forward. It is also encouraging that, through the same resolution in 2005, the General Assembly authorized the convening of a group of governmental experts, which we hope can lead to progress towards the eventual regulation of arms brokering. Brokers, who are currently carrying out their work in most countries without any regulation, are to a great extent responsible for diverting weapons to illicit destinations, including transfers to regions of conflict — sometimes even in violation of arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council — or directing arms to States where serious abuses of human rights occur.

In order to be effective, the fight against the illicit trade in small arms must be expanded to also include ammunition. Without ammunition, small arms and light weapons are useless. We cannot regulate the one component without regulating the other.

In exercising their inherent right to self-defence, countries need to use small arms and light weapons legally for their armed forces and police. Nevertheless,

one cannot overlook the fact that, in some instances, although destined for legal use, small arms and light weapons are diverted to illegal recipients. A means to fight that loophole in our system is the adoption of the end-user certificate. Both the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have relevant provisions in place. We hope that that measure can be generally adopted and applied as a useful means to curb the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons.

We support the Security Council's recently increased attention to the issue of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants into their societies. The negative humanitarian and development impact of the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons will be greatly reduced through the adoption of DDR measures, which would greatly contribute to the stabilization of conflict-torn societies. Therefore, DDR should be introduced as an integral part of post-conflict peace agreements and development strategies.

Measures also have to be taken to ensure strict compliance with United Nations embargoes and sanctions in conflict areas. The Council should spare no effort to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as to identify potential links between their illicit trade and the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources. Zero tolerance for smugglers must be the rule, since smuggling rekindles conflicts through their illegal financing.

Needless to say, countries should exert restraint when exporting to areas of conflict, even if an arms embargo has not yet been imposed. It is our common duty and responsibility to help regulate and control the trade of those weapons of choice in so many conflicts around the world.

In closing, we are in favour of adopting a relevant draft resolution and we hope that the negotiations will soon be completed and that the Council will be able to adopt it.

Mr. Shcherbak (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank you, Sir, for convening this important meeting and the Secretary-General for his report on small arms.

We note the participation in today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, Mr. Oscar Maúrtua, and thank the Officer-in-Charge of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for her substantive briefing on this issue.

The Russian Federation has consistently advocated increasing the coordinating role of the Organization in addressing the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Preventing the illicit proliferation of such weapons is particularly relevant in the context of combating terrorism and mitigating the impact of armed conflicts.

We consider of great importance the United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in July. We believe that, as its very name indicates, the Programme of Action is aimed at preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Unfortunately, it is clear that much remains to be done in that field. In our view, therefore, it is still too early to consider extending the Programme of Action's scope to monitoring the legal transfer of weapons, as such a proposal exceeds its framework. Although we are not opposed to discussing the legal supply of small arms and light weapons, we believe that such a discussion is acceptable only in cases in which it would directly serve the purpose of combating the illicit trade in such weapons.

We would suggest that one of the principal challenges before the international community in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is, above all, the implementation of those provisions of the Programme of Action that seek to increase the effectiveness of national legislation in that sphere and to strengthen regional cooperation aimed at finding concrete and practical means to combat the illicit trade in those weapons.

In order to prevent small arms and light weapons moving from the legal to the illicit trade, the following national measures are needed.

First, we must limit the number of intermediaries in the small arms trade and establish clear State regulatory systems for brokerage activities in that area.

Secondly, we need to ban supplies of small arms and light weapons to non-State structures and

organizations, as is currently being done with regard to man-portable air defence systems.

Thirdly, we need to implement controls by exporting States on how the authorized bodies of importing States are respecting their obligations regarding the proper use of imported small arms and light weapons, including undertaking random checks on storage conditions for imported weapons.

I should also like to draw particular attention to one of the obvious sources of illicit weapons — their manufacture and transfer without licenses or the permission of the country of origin to the manufacturer or owner of the technology to produce such weapons.

On many occasions, the Security Council has considered the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons with respect to conflict situations on its agenda. The Russian Federation advocates the adoption of strong and effective measures in cases in which small arms and light weapons are provided to illegal armed groups. Our experience with the implementation of embargoes on small arms and light weapons in conflict situations confirms the effectiveness of such measures by the Security Council. Of primary importance is monitoring adherence to the Security Council's arms embargoes, increasing the effectiveness of controls, and investigating violations of embargoes.

Our experience in the settlement of conflicts has convincingly demonstrated the direct link between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the activities of illegal armed groups, the involvement of child soldiers in conflicts, large-scale violations of human rights and the norms of international humanitarian law, and transnational crime. It is becoming increasingly clear that we must prevent small arms and light weapons — particularly in their most dangerous forms — from falling into the hands of terrorists.

We believe it important to continue to pay particular attention to concrete measures to counteract the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the preventive and post-conflict settlement stages. In that regard, the experience of regional organizations is extremely relevant and useful.

Mrs. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Sir, for organizing this meeting today, and I join in welcoming the Foreign Minister of Peru to our discussions.

I should also like to thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her presentation of the Secretary-General's report.

The illicit flow of weapons, such as small arms, to areas of conflict and the role they play in exacerbating humanitarian crises are evident in Darfur, in the Sudan. Illegal weapons flows from the Sudan's neighbours and across its porous borders have fuelled violence and atrocities, created over 2 million internally displaced persons, and displaced over 200,000 refugees. The United States and the Security Council have been active in urging the parties in the Sudan to adhere to the ceasefire and rapidly to accelerate the peace talks in Abuja. I cannot stress enough that arms embargoes provide one of the most significant mechanisms through which to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Attacking the global illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons is an important initiative that States should — indeed, must — address because of its wide-ranging effects. The illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons can be used to exacerbate conflict, threaten civilian populations in regions of conflict, endanger the work of peacekeeping forces and humanitarian aid workers, and greatly complicate the hard work of economically and politically rebuilding war-torn societies.

Alleviating those problems is in the interests of all of us. Small arms and light weapons, in our understanding, are the strictly military arms that are contributing to continued violence and suffering in regions of conflict around the world. We separate these military arms from firearms such as hunting rifles and pistols, which are commonly owned and used by citizens in many countries. It is the illicit trade in military small arms and light weapons that we are here to address and that should properly concern us.

The United States believes that the most effective way to prevent small arms and light weapons from getting into criminal hands is through the national implementation of strict export and import controls, the adoption of strong brokering laws, secure storage of small arms and light weapons and the destruction of excess small arms and light weapons.

The United States has one of the strongest, most rigorous systems in the world for regulating the export

of arms. All United States exports of defence articles and services — including small arms and light weapons such as automatic rifles, machine guns, shoulder-fired missile and rocket systems and light mortars — must be approved by the Department of State. All transactions are conditioned on United States authorization for re-export. With respect to both exports and imports, the United States rigorously monitors arms transfers and routinely investigates suspicious activities.

The United States has been active in stemming the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have promoted transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms, and we have worked to prevent their destabilizing accumulation in forums such as the Wassenaar Arrangement. We offer bilateral, financial and technical assistance to help countries develop national export and import controls, improve border security against arms smugglers and secure and destroy illicit stocks of small and light weapons in conflict-prone regions.

Since 2001 the United States has assisted in the destruction of more than 800,000 small arms and light weapons and more than 80 million rounds of ammunition. In addition, since 2003 we have assisted in the destruction of more than 18,000 man-portable defence systems (MANPADS) in 17 countries and have strongly supported initiatives to promote adherence to enhanced controls of MANPADS in multilateral forums such as the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and others. Since 2000, the United States has provided technical assistance to more than 20 countries in the area of stockpile security and management, and has assisted many countries in various regions of the world in their efforts to identify and trace United States-origin firearms used in criminal activities, including terrorist acts.

In 2001 United Nations Member States came together to address the problems caused by the international illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The United States continues to stand unequivocally behind the positions that we expressed in our official statement at that meeting and that we have consistently applied since. Since 2001 we have worked hard with many States present here today to meet the provisions of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. And it is imperative that we remain focused on fulfilling the obligations made in 2001, without our attention being diverted by revisiting old debates or addressing issues that are tangential to our main purposes.

The United States has a long-demonstrated commitment to finding practical and effective ways of curbing the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, such as our own strict export-import controls and the significant assistance that we have provided to other States. We remain ready to continue that support, and we urge others to render similar assistance.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this very important debate. We are very much aware of the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru.

Of course my delegation fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

Today, I shall limit myself to several remarks. First I shall speak on the context, and then I shall make three proposals.

Regarding the context, I would say that at the beginning of the 1990s, following the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel Mines, we began to think about small arms. We owe that primarily to the initiative of African countries; I am thinking in particular of Mali. Since then, very fortunately, the international community has developed a number of measures or instruments. The Economic Community of West African States is playing an important role; the European Union supports it and has adopted its own strategy. I was interested in what Peru's Minister for Foreign Affairs said about what is happening in Latin America.

I believe that these regional initiatives complement or support what we are doing at the global level. In that regard, the United Nations Programme of Action is obviously playing a fundamental role. I thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her report on this subject. The International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Small Arms and Light Weapons was a very important step. In short, there is a collective effort, a regime that is being established. It cannot fail to be very complex, because this is a very complex problem.

My last observation on the context is that in parallel, day by day, in the issues before the Security

Council, we see the importance — and, I would say, the growing importance — of the issue of small arms in the crises that we are dealing with. Some of our African colleagues have already mentioned this. Ambassador Wolcott Sanders also referred to it when she mentioned the case of Darfur.

What is to be done? Permit me to make three proposals to the Council.

The first is in keeping with the international regime that is being gradually put in place. We believe it is now time to go further in controlling small arms and light weapons. In that regard, we support the proposal of a treaty on the weapons trade, which is based on a proposal from the non-governmental organization Oxfam. We believe that the Programme of Action review conference to be held in a few weeks' time could be an opportunity to revisit this issue. Indeed, we should take the opportunity of the First Committee meeting in the autumn to begin a negotiating process for such a convention.

I now turn to my second proposal. When we consider in very specific terms what is happening in the Security Council on each of the crises we are addressing — particularly when we consider the work of the sanctions monitoring committees — we realize that there is a crucial problem, a practical problem, that arises every time: the problem of the transport, including aerial transport, of small arms and light weapons. That is a very difficult problem to deal with, because there is, of course, a legal trade and because sometimes there is a lack of regulations, or regulations that differ from State to State. There are also inequalities in the capacities of States to manage their airspace. In short, in legal and technical terms, it is a very difficult problem to address. But at the same time, our experience has shown that now is time to deal with it. We propose, within the framework of the European Union and in other contexts, to launch a process of reflection on the various dimensions of this problem. However, political will is also required, and I believe that in this respect we need to make use of the practical experience of our committees, for example those on Liberia and on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have made very useful comments on the issue.

Finally, let me turn to the third proposal. Here once again the Security Council's experience has demonstrated that, in our approach to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we can no longer make a clear distinction between the trade itself and the environment in which it takes place, particularly with respect to its financing.

How were small arms and light weapons funded in Liberia and in Sierra Leone? Clearly, that took place through the trade in diamonds and in other natural resources. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is the plundering of natural resources that is fuelling that illicit trade. We believe, therefore, that we need to draw lessons here, and that, in the forthcoming stages of our efforts to combat the scourge of small arms and light weapons, we must — as was stated earlier by the representative of the Congo — make increasingly clear the link between the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons and the broader issue of the plundering of natural resources and the funding of such trade.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to you for having convened this very important meeting; to Minister Maúrtua de Romana of Peru for his presence and participation; and to Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her introduction of the Secretary-General's report. The report, which effectively identifies both the progress made in the area of small arms over a period of slightly more than a year and the challenges to be addressed in the future, will serve as a valuable guidepost for our future endeavours.

Since the last time the Council discussed this issue, on 17 February 2005, there have been some remarkable achievements. Most notable, after a long debate and painstaking efforts by the Open-ended Working Group last June, was the adoption of the international instrument on marking and tracing. It is my pleasure to say that, despite some diverging views, in the end, the instrument was nevertheless adopted by consensus.

I would like to commend Ambassador Anton Thalmann of Switzerland for his outstanding chairmanship. He showed enormous patience and perseverance in accommodating the different positions of Member States. Credit should also be given to the Member States, which showed the flexibility necessary to conclude the work of the Open-ended Working Group. Hereafter all States should work steadily to ensure the full implementation of the instrument.

Another important development last year was the Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to

Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The dynamic chairmanship of Ambassador Pasi Patokallio of Finland greatly contributed to the deliberations' having proceeded so smoothly.

This year is of particular significance in the context of efforts to address the issue of small arms and light weapons. First and foremost, the first Review Conference is to be held toward the end of June. That important event will provide an opportunity for Member States to take a comprehensive look at the status of the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted in 2001 and to set a course for future action.

Although we were fortunate enough to witness the developments I mentioned, as well as others described in the Secretary-General's report, we all know that there remain a number of outstanding issues to be addressed. Japan, recognizing how great the stakes are for the Review Conference, will provide its full support to Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka and the President-designate of the Conference, both at the preparatory stage and at the Conference itself.

Japan is of the view that, in the context of efforts to make tangible progress in the field of small arms and light weapons, international rule-making efforts and the implementation of small-arms-related projects on the ground should be promoted in parallel. Only through balanced efforts in both areas will it be possible to make real headway on this issue.

With regard to rule-making efforts, we look forward to the discussions to be held by the group of governmental experts on brokering when it is established following the Review Conference. Japan hopes that the group will produce a good report that will provide a comprehensive picture of the present situation, so that the international community can better address the problem it faces.

In addition, Japan, as a non-arms-exporter in principle, believes it essential for Member States to strengthen arms transfer control, with a view to curbing the unregulated trade in small arms and light weapons. On that front, my delegation is pleased that some encouraging initiatives have been taken, and Japan will continue to participate actively in related discussions.

Just as important as international rule-making efforts is the promotion of projects on the ground. For the issue of small arms and light weapons to be dealt with effectively, the national and public authorities of affected countries are required to implement and enforce those rules. We have been paying a great deal of attention to the state of affairs in this area. In that respect, what is needed is assistance in the collection and destruction of weapons and in the development of the capacity of national and local authorities.

The execution of projects on the ground is of paramount importance. Japan considers that the expertise and experience gained by implementing projects in the field can and should be widely shared with other countries and regions. The idea of collecting best practices is based on that conviction. In this regard, since a number of projects have been carried out by members of civil society, the participation of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been engaged in those activities is indispensable and should be encouraged. Japan welcomes the inclusion of this topic as part of the provisional work programme of the forthcoming Review Conference and hopes that the exercise will serve to enhance understanding of the importance of lessons learned.

We very much hope that the Security Council will continue to pay attention to this cross-cutting issue in the area of international peace and security. We would like to request that the Secretary-General continue to update us with progress reports as he deems necessary.

Finally, Mr. President, I appreciate the efforts that you and your team have made to arrive at a text that Japan believes the Council will be able to adopt soon. My delegation will continue to work constructively with other delegations to sort out outstanding issues.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): We join others in welcoming the Foreign Minister of Peru to the Council and in thanking Ms. Hoppe for her briefing. I should also like to associate my delegation with the statement of the European Union, to be delivered later by the representative of Austria.

The fight against the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons must be a key priority for the Security Council.

The spread and availability of small arms seriously challenge the maintenance of international peace and security by fuelling underlying tensions,

exacerbating crises and hampering peacebuilding efforts. We welcome today's debate as an important opportunity for the Council to discuss how it may reinforce its efforts to deal with that issue, not least in Africa. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report to the Council.

The Council is, however, only one actor needed to tackle the scourge of small arms and light weapons. The multifaceted trajectories of the supply of arms crisscrossing the globe and the diverse motives underlying the demand for those arms render solutions propagated by any single actor or within any single field incomplete at best. The Council must join forces with a range of other actors, each with a comparative advantage at the global, regional and national levels and in diverse fields — security, legal, political and development.

Let me offer a number of points within three key action areas. The key small arms event of the year is the United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action this coming summer. To retain its position as the main global instrument for a comprehensive approach, the Programme needs an ambitious, forward-looking review, the benchmark of success being its ability to act as a catalyst for action-oriented multilateral and bilateral measures.

In that respect, Denmark welcomes the Instrument on marking and tracing small arms and light weapons, but would have preferred it to be legally binding. We encourage a determined effort on brokering and actively supporting efforts to start negotiations on an arms trade treaty. We call for the adoption of measures on arms control at the review conference.

The General Assembly, not the Security Council, is the focus and locus of such initiatives. There is an urgent need for progress in the coming years to overcome and make up for the dismal failure of the outcome document of the high-level summit last summer to address the issue of disarmament. The Council should endeavour to strengthen its cooperation with the General Assembly on disarmament issues, fully respecting the General Assembly's important mandate in that field.

In that regard, it is clear that an arms trade treaty would greatly strengthen the effectiveness of the Security Council's arms embargoes. For the Council, arms embargoes are a key instrument for confronting the threat emanating from small arms, and while the Council has made progress in enacting embargoes in a timely manner, we must explore avenues for implementing and monitoring them better.

Member States should be encouraged to bring their own national legislation into line with the Council's measures and to take the required legal action against sanctions violators. The Council, for its part, can employ targeted sanctions, such as travel bans against individuals or entities breaching embargoes. In order to get a fuller picture of the financial flows involved, the Council should, as also mentioned by my Congolese and French colleagues, request audits and analyses of the money trail in timber, minerals, cocoa or other commodity trading suspected of financing arms flows. Furthermore, peacekeepers should be provided with the necessary mandates and resources to assist in monitoring embargoes. In all those areas, much could be gained from a thorough study of the lessons learned concerning the sanctions regimes against, for instance, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

Difficult conditions often prevail in societies awash with small arms. Those include a collapse in the rule of law, the absence of effective State institutions, massive unemployment, a proliferation of crime and impunity. Only by addressing such root causes and effectively decreasing demand for weapons will we succeed in curtailing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the long run.

Mindful of the security-development nexus, the Council must help ensure funding for the full disarmament, demobilization and reintegration circle and advance regional cooperation among peace operations to tackle cross-border challenges from mercenaries. Security sector reform and the rule of law, with special attention paid to vulnerable groups, such as women and children, must form an integral part of the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. The Peacebuilding Commission will play a strategic role in that regard.

In conclusion, Denmark sincerely hopes the Council will shortly be able to adopt a resolution that spells out our strong commitment to tackling the deadly virus of small arms and light weapons within the Council's mandate. We see no reason for further delay in that regard.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on the important issue of small arms and light weapons. Taking into account the extremely high human toll that small arms take each year and the threats they represent to peace and stability in various countries and regions, they are one of the most pressing problems facing global security today.

We thank Ms. Hoppe for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on small arms, which provides a comprehensive overview of the progress achieved in the implementation of the 12 recommendations laid out in his report of 20 September 2002.

Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered shortly by the Permanent Representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, I will limit my statement to a few remarks.

The implications and consequences of the proliferation of small arms are very disturbing. In some societies, they create a vicious circle of violence and crime that traps entire populations in an endless cycle of war and large-scale human rights abuses, including the exploitation and misuse of children as child soldiers. We also note with concern the link between the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources and the illicit trade in small arms.

In that regard, we believe that more efficient action on the part of the international community is needed to address those issues. We strongly support all measures in the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We believe that, if implemented by all Member States, those measures would greatly mitigate the negative impact of small arms on civilians and societies around the world and contribute to preventing their illicit trade.

We note with satisfaction that progress continues to be made towards the objectives of the Programme of Action. However, there is clearly room for its wider implementation. We urge all Member States to demonstrate stronger political will in order to strengthen that global instrument.

The upcoming five-year comprehensive review conference on the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action this coming summer will be, in our view, an important opportunity for States to discuss the extent of the progress achieved in implementing that instrument and, hopefully, to adopt a comprehensive plan of action for the future. We also welcome the adoption of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Even though the Instrument is not legally binding, it is an important step in the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action.

United Nations arms embargoes are an important multilateral tool of the Security Council and the international community for responding to armed conflict and violations of international norms. We urge all Member States to respect and enforce all Security Council resolutions, including those imposing arms embargoes. As United Nations mandatory arms embargoes are legally binding, we believe that all Member States have to make their violation a criminal offence in their national legislation. The authority of the Security Council and the United Nations may be greatly undermined by persistent violations of United Nations embargoes and the impunity of the violators. The observations of expert and monitoring groups dealing with United Nations arms embargoes in various countries clearly demonstrate that violations in that area are widespread and systematic. We believe that the Security Council should not hesitate to use coercive measures against Member States or entities that deliberately violate those embargoes.

In that regard, the Security Council should strengthen its commitment to finding practical and effective ways to further improve the design, monitoring and compliance aspects of arms-embargo regimes. In that connection, we welcome and support the draft resolution prepared by your delegation, Mr. President. We urge the Council to adopt it as soon as possible.

The destabilizing effects of small arms on post-conflict societies have been increasingly recognized in the work of the Security Council. An essential part of successful small-arms control in countries in post-conflict situations is a well-governed security sector that comprises civil, political, judicial and security institutions.

With regard to its mandates for peacekeeping operations, the Council should continue to strengthen provisions pertaining to the disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, as well as measures for the collection and destruction of illicit and surplus weapons. We believe that effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes must be undertaken as a key component of any post-conflict strategy.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that we agree with the observation of the Secretary-General contained in his report as regards the need to strengthen interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly in developing a coherent and comprehensive United Nations policy on small arms and light weapons. In our view, better interaction and cooperation between States at the regional and subregional levels and with the United Nations in tackling the problem of the proliferation of small arms should also be an important part of that comprehensive policy. Slovakia stands ready to contribute to, and support, those efforts.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): First of all, I wish to join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for holding this debate on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We also wish to acknowledge the presence of the Foreign Minister of Peru.

The adverse impact of the trade in small arms and light weapons on socio-economic development and international peace and security has been universally emphasized, and the Security Council has been reminded repeatedly of its obligation to play a positive role in bringing the proliferation of such weapons under effective control.

According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/109) — for which we thank Ms. Hoppe for introducing — some success, albeit mixed, has been achieved since 1999, when the Council became seized of the threat posed by the illicit small arms and light weapons. The Council has contributed to that achievement through various proactive measures, including by imposing arms embargoes in conflict areas, stifling funds obtained from the illegal exploitation of natural resources by rebel groups and strengthening disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. No less significant — despite my delegation's reservations regarding its purely political and voluntary nature — is the adoption of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Despite the progress achieved, the scale of the problem remains huge, and a lot needs to be done. Available reports indicate that, at the end of last year, there were 600 million small arms and light weapons in circulation worldwide, which were directly or indirectly linked to the loss of 50,000 lives.

West Africa is a region that has, sadly, experienced widespread havoc and untold suffering from illicit small arms and light weapons as a result of the ease of their availability and handling and their indiscriminate use by rebel groups, including child soldiers and criminal gangs. For us those weapons are, in a profound sense, nothing short of weapons of mass destruction. That explains the determination of the Economic Community of West African States to convert its moratorium into a legally binding convention. The Second Continental Conference of African Governmental Experts on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, which was held in Windhoek, clearly enunciated Africa's position on the issue. The eradication of such weapons therefore remains a matter of utmost priority.

My delegation believes more could be done to that end through financial and technical assistance to assist Member States, especially those contiguous to conflict zones, to strengthen their capacity to enforce the agreed measures, including prosecuting persons who violate embargoes.

We also share the concern about the need for concrete measures to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources to fund the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We endorse the suggestion that past reports of the Expert Panel on that matter, and similar bodies working in that field, could provide useful information on lessons learned.

Effective DDR programmes are widely recognized as a key component of, and a precondition for, successful peacebuilding. Nonetheless, it must be emphasized that DDR, while a necessary first step, must be underpinned by the provision of employment opportunities for ex-combatants. We therefore welcome the decision on strengthening the financing of such programmes through the expansion of measures covered under the budget for peacekeeping operations, even if that is also partly dependent upon voluntary contributions. We should, however, avoid adopting a

one-size-fits-all approach, and take into account the peculiarities of the countries concerned and the regional dimensions, as and when necessary.

Unsecured stockpiles of collected weapons are attractive sources for the illicit trafficking in weapons into neighbouring countries and into potential zones of conflict. An integral part of a weapons-collection programme should be the destruction of surplus stockpiles in a transparent manner, taking into consideration the security needs of the country concerned.

Control over arms transfers is a crucial area meriting an effective international instrument, especially with regard to transfers to armed rebel groups, organized criminals and terrorists. While it is the right of States to acquire weapons for self-defence and law enforcement, it is equally their responsibility to ensure that weapons legally acquired do not end up in the hands of non-State actors, only to be used to fuel violence and conflict.

Although some progress has been made in that sphere, the lack of uniform regulation is detrimental to our common cause. What is required is a transparent, non-discriminatory and non-selective international standard on transfer control and end-user certificates. We also share the Secretary-General's sentiment regarding the future inclusion of international transfers in small arms and light weapons in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We welcome Interpol's efforts to establish a system for tracing weapons and explosives.

Effective transfer controls will be illusory without addressing the issue of brokering, which is central to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The establishment of robust regulation would prevent unscrupulous brokers from acting with impunity. We therefore look forward to the establishment of a group of governmental experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

The inextricable nexus between development and security has been widely acknowledged. While supporting efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we need to intensify our efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict, including the scourge of poverty. The demand for weapons will remain strong as long as conflicts fester and solutions to their fundamental causes are not addressed. It is therefore important that the efforts of developing countries towards sustainable development are supported by the international community, especially by our development partners, through redeeming the pledges and renewing the commitments made at the 2005 World Summit.

One of the 12 core recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General pertains to the need for the Council and the General Assembly to work in tandem to promote long-term strategies to deal with the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons. Viewed from that perspective, the Secretary-General's report is opportune, coming a few months before the convening of the conference to review the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action. It is our fervent hope that the outcome of this debate will further galvanize momentum within Member States and illuminate the path towards the attainment of comprehensive measures to contain illicit small arms and light weapons. We look forward to working with other members of the Council to adopt a resolution on this issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Argentina.

At the outset, I would like to thank the members of the Council who positively responded to my delegation's proposal to hold a debate on the important issue of small arms. Secondly, on behalf of my country, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Peru for the presence of Minister Oscar Maúrtua.

I should also like to say that Argentina endorses and associates itself with the intervention to be made by the Ambassador of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group. I would also like to thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her extensive presentation of the Secretary-General's report. The report highlights in detail the progress made and the tasks ahead.

On many occasions, we have heard in this forum how, in many places throughout the world where it is very difficult to find a meal or a comfortable bed, it is easy to find a weapon, a machine gun or a grenade. We know that armed conflicts may originate in many causes, but if they are to take place, they require one indispensable element: access to significant amounts of small arms and light weapons.

The international community has seen how the phenomenon of war has become a way of life for combatants. It does not matter whether they are on the side of the insurgents or of any particular Government. Wars of that kind do not recognize a real ideological context. Worse yet is the fact that, for many people, especially teenagers, joining militias is the only profitable employment available.

That terrible situation, which affects us all, was graphically described to us by the representatives of non-governmental organizations who participated last Thursday in the first Arria formula meeting on this issue, organized by Ambassador De Rivero of Peru. We thank him and his mission.

The Programme of Action adopted in 2001 reified the political will of the international community to address the issue, while laying the foundations to address the humanitarian and economic dimensions of the problem caused by small arms and light weapons.

At the same time, Member States agreed to cooperate with the United Nations system effectively to implement arms embargoes adopted by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter and urged the Council to consider in each case the possibility of including in the mandates and budgets of peacekeeping operations, when appropriate, provisions regarding the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Today, almost seven years since the Security Council first addressed the issue of small arms and in view of the forthcoming first review conference of the Programme of Action, we remain convinced that both the Security Council and the General Assembly should study ways to improve their interaction on issues linked to small arms in order to promote and elaborate long-term strategies in the framework of preventing armed conflicts and peacebuilding, as well as to identify the links between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the exploitation of natural and other resources, and armed conflict.

In its presidential statements, the Council has recognized that the accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons compromise its effectiveness in discharging its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It would therefore seem evident to us — and, it would seem, to many members of the Security Council that have spoken here — that the time has come for the Council to send a strong political message by adopting a resolution calling for the resolute and timely implementation of arms embargoes.

We trust that, when such a decision is adopted, we will speak as one, since the strict observance of embargoes undoubtedly contributes to combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which is nothing but a criminal activity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

As a measure to optimize the use of our time in order to allow as many delegations as possible to take the floor, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the table or to resume their seats at the side of the Council Chamber. When a speaker takes the floor, the conference officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table. I thank speakers for their understanding and cooperation.

I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): In the presence of the Foreign Minister of Peru, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and the countries aligning themselves with this statement.

Substantive progress has already been achieved since the adoption in 2001 of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We welcome this opportunity to address that important subject in the Security Council just a few months before the first review conference. I am particularly happy to see you, Sir, presiding over this meeting, since Argentina and the European Union share many concerns in that field, as well as the conviction that much stronger concerted efforts by the international community are necessary.

Small arms still constitute the weapons of choice in the vast majority of conflicts under the consideration of the Security Council. From Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan to Haiti, Iraq and Afghanistan, small arms are used by militias, armed groups and terrorists to commit the worst atrocities imaginable against civilian populations, disrupt the political processes under way, control the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and contribute to the destabilization of whole regions. The easy availability of small arms and light weapons,

ammunition and explosives is in itself a fuelling factor for many of those conflicts.

The European Union welcomes the continuing emphasis by the Security Council on arms embargoes and on the links between the illicit exploitation of natural resources and the illicit trade in small arms. However, as evidenced in the reports of the various expert and monitoring groups that are supporting the Security Council's sanctions committees in their work, much remains to be done in order to make that central tool of the Council more effective. Often, the inability to trace arms flows and the lack of appropriate records inhibit the effective execution of the work of those expert groups. Global standards on the marking and tracing of small arms are essential if we are to understand, track and crack down on the illegal trade in those weapons.

The European Union regards the adoption by the General Assembly in 2005 of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons as a first and important step. If implemented by States with the necessary political will, the Instrument will help to discourage and thus reduce the illicit traffic in small arms, as well as aid in implementing United Nations arms embargoes. Unfortunately, provisions on the right of United Nations peacekeeping operations to initiate tracing requests and on ammunition could not be incorporated into the Instrument. We hope that the Instrument can be strengthened at future review meetings, making it legally binding.

With regard to the Secretary-General's recommendations on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), we welcome the increased attention paid to that issue by the Security Council and, in particular, to the importance of inter-mission cooperation in DDR. The post-conflict situations in West Africa, where transborder movements of arms, combatants and illicitly exploited resources are contributing to continued insecurity and instability, are a case in point for the need for cooperation and coherence within the United Nations system. We look forward to the operationalization of the Peacebuilding Commission as a forum where the serious small-arms problems faced by many countries recovering from conflict can be usefully addressed in an integrated manner.

We welcome the work done elsewhere within the United Nations to develop integrated international standards for DDR, and we look forward to their implementation. The European Union is of the opinion that assistance should be provided to conflict-affected countries with the aim of fostering security, disarmament and demobilization as well as the reintegration of ex-combatants into civil society — taking into account the special needs of women and children — as an integral part of post-conflict peace agreements and development strategies.

We believe that in order to alleviate the serious impact of the proliferation of illicit small arms on conflict, development and human rights, United Nations efforts to control small arms have to be intensified, notably through measures on brokering, transfer controls, marking and tracing, end-user certification, stockpile management and destruction, ammunition and especially capacity-building. The European Union welcomes the decision to establish a group of governmental experts to study global regulations on brokering. The EU recognizes the close link between illicit small arms and their ammunition, and the need to find a coordinated response to these issues.

The EU encourages the use of minimum common standards in transfer controls, including criteria or guidelines to determine whether a proposed transfer of small arms will aggravate conflict, repress human rights or undermine development. Such guidelines can also prevent a shipment from being diverted to the illegal market. The 1998 EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports represents one of several examples of agreed regional instruments. Many other regions have adopted their own agreements. We will endeavour to reach substantive progress on all these issues at the review conference to be held in June and July this year.

In our view, the integration of small-arms measures into development assistance must be strengthened. In that respect, we welcome the adoption by the General Assembly at its sixtieth session of resolution 60/68, on addressing the negative humanitarian and development impact of the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation. The classification of assistance for small-arms control as official development assistance by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development last year

allows States to include armed-violence prevention programmes in their poverty reduction strategies and enables donors to provide assistance for small-arms control as part of their development cooperation programmes.

Our contribution in this field is based on the recent European Union strategy on small arms and their ammunition, which formalizes the Union's existing small-arms policies. It is a strategy with a global geographical scope, and it makes several proposals for progress at the 2006 review conference. The strategy identifies Africa as the continent worst affected by the impact of internal and cross-border conflicts aggravated by the destabilizing influx of small arms and light weapons, but it also covers Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America.

The European Union expresses its readiness to continue to provide support, both financial and technical, to Governments, non-governmental organizations and regional organizations and arrangements engaged in the fight against the trafficking in and misuse of small arms and light weapons, as well as in the elimination of dangerous stockpiles of small arms.

For a few years now, the Security Council has been seized of the matter of small arms, since it has recognized that the illicit trade in small arms plays a central role in fuelling conflicts and spreading instability. We welcome the draft resolution under consideration by the Council and commend Argentina for preparing it. It is a sign of the Council's heightened awareness of this issue. We are confident that the Security Council will continue to pay special attention to this cross-cutting issue, and we call upon all States to do their utmost to contribute to the fight against this scourge, which is killing thousands of people every day.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Pfanzelter for his support for the draft resolution now before the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Guyana.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group — Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and Guyana.

At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, and the Argentine Republic on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March 2006 and on your excellent leadership of the Council. We also recognize and welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru. In addition, the Group thanks the Secretary-General for the report (S/2006/109) submitted for the Council's consideration.

For the members of the Rio Group, this open Security Council debate on small arms provides an opportunity to encourage the complementarity of efforts by the international community and the United Nations system in the light of the threat that such weapons pose to security and stability throughout the world. For us, it is very important to stop the illicit use of small arms and light weapons and to promote the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

This meeting is being held a few months before the General Assembly reviews the progress achieved in implementing the Programme of Action and considers what still needs to be done in that regard. Thus, it is an opportune time for the Security Council to provide its support and inspiration to the Assembly with respect to the review process and to show its own commitment to contributing to the collective efforts aimed at eradicating the illegal flow of small arms, as well as the efforts that the Council is carrying out in its own right to ensure the implementation of its decisions in the area of small arms and light weapons.

There can be no doubt that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons represents a grave threat to the security and stability of many regions of the world. Latin America and the Caribbean are not immune to the trade's destabilizing impact on States and societies. We are also very aware of the complex and multidimensional nature of the problem, which involves, inter alia, the dimensions of security, conflict prevention and resolution and crime prevention and humanitarian, health and development dimensions.

Indeed, the very nature of the problem requires a holistic and coordinated response on the part of the international community as a matter of obligation. Such a response must tackle all of the aspects of the problem so as to address the threat it poses to life and

to human survival. A coherent and comprehensive approach on the part of the United Nations must be a crucial part of such an international response.

The Rio Group believes that in order to tackle the challenge of the illicit trade in small arms, we urgently need to strengthen cooperation and international assistance, including technical and financial assistance, when appropriate, to support and facilitate efforts at the local, national, regional and global levels designed to prevent, combat and eradicate that scourge. This will also require a strong commitment and leadership on the part of the Member States; the support of international, regional and subregional organizations; and the commitment of civil society.

An ongoing problem in this area is the growing ease with which civilians obtain access to arms and ammunition, through a variety of ways and means, both licit and illicit. As a result, the Rio Group believes that we must ensure stricter control and broader regulations on the part of national authorities with respect to those arms that are in the possession of civilians, in order to prevent not only the spread of violence but also to minimize the human, social and economic cost incurred by the use of such weapons.

Our countries would like to reiterate the need to deal with the causes behind the demand for small arms and light weapons and to promote a culture of peace in which conflict resolution can be achieved through dialogue and other peaceful means, avoiding the use of violence and the resort to arms.

While we await the upcoming review of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Rio Group cannot but express its conviction that the progress we have seen and the measures that have been adopted to date fall far short of what we might wish for or require in tackling this challenge. For example, the members of the Rio Group, which were very clear in stating their preference for a legally binding instrument allowing States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, small arms and light weapons, all were disappointed by the fact that that goal was not achieved. However, the Group is ready to contribute to strengthening cooperation in this area, building on the limited progress we have achieved this far. In that respect, the members of the Rio Group all have acceded to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

The Rio Group believes that, in order fully to achieve the goals established by the Programme of Action, the international community must tackle areas such as identification and tracing, export and import controls, as well as brokering. In that respect, the Group stresses the need expressly to ban the transfer of any type of weapon to non-State agents.

Allow me to comment briefly on a few aspects of the Secretary-General's report.

First, with respect to arms embargoes, we believe that the Security Council must create new mechanisms to guarantee compliance with arms embargoes. Furthermore, we support recommendation 5 in the report of the Secretary-General, which calls on Member States to enforce all Council resolutions which impose such embargoes, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and to adopt their own national legislation in this area.

We also support recommendation 9 of the report, which encourages States that have not already done so to establish the necessary legislative and other measures, including the use of authenticated end-user certificates, to ensure effective control over the export and transit of small arms and light weapons.

Likewise, the Rio Group supports recommendation 10 of the report, which calls on the Security Council, during the application of arms embargoes, to give particular attention to the restriction of the supply of ammunition suitable for weapons already extensively available in the countries and regions where arms embargoes have been imposed.

Furthermore, we cannot fail to mention the threat posed by the diversion of small arms and light weapons, in particular Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), to terrorist groups. In that respect, we welcome the decision to expand the scope of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a global transparency and confidence-building measure, and we encourage arms-exporting countries to exercise the utmost responsibility in their transactions and to prevent flows of arms and ammunition to conflict areas.

In conclusion, the Rio Group will continue to seek greater interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly, duly taking into account

their respective mandates in order to promote a coherent and effective response by the United Nations to the challenges posed by small arms.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate the representative of Guyana for having made the first statement in the Security Council on behalf of the 21 member countries of the Rio Group.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Australia, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Millar (Australia): Australia welcomes the Security Council's continuing consideration of small arms and light weapons and the Secretary-General's useful and comprehensive report to the Council on small arms. The Council's ongoing attention to small arms issues, particularly in the regional context, will serve to strengthen the international community's resolve to work towards the prevention of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that context, we welcome and support the discussions by the Security Council on the draft resolution on small arms sponsored by Argentina.

All States Members of the United Nations have a responsibility to address the small arms threat. Member States should affirm and facilitate legitimate trade in small arms and light weapons through national implementation of effective transfer controls which take into account relevant arms embargoes; the prevention of destabilizing accumulations of small arms and light weapons; the internal and regional situation of the recipient State; and the risk of diversion to unauthorized users, including terrorists and other criminals.

Australia notes the particular need for effective stockpile management, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and security sector reform in post-conflict and other developing countries. Australia encourages international cooperation and assistance, in particular at the bilateral and regional levels.

The success of the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) demonstrates how integrated efforts to improve governance, including in the areas of justice and law and order, can, in addition to efforts to reduce the availability of small arms and light weapons, reduce demand for weapons and facilitate sustainable peacebuilding.

We are working with a number of Member States, both in our region and more widely, on practically focussed outcomes to prevent the destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons, including in the areas of capacity-building and needs assessment.

Australia welcomes the confirmation by the Secretary-General in his report of the growing participation of Member States in the Register of Conventional Arms, including in relation to man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). Australia remains concerned about the unauthorized possession and use of MANPADS by non-State actors and the dangers those weapons pose to civilian aviation.

Australia's international MANPADS initiative, announced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Downer, in December 2005, is designed to build on the Australian-sponsored resolutions at the last two United Nations General Assembly sessions and to encourage States — notably those in our own region, the Asia-Pacific region — to introduce or strengthen controls over the manufacture, storage and transfer of MANPADS and related equipment, training and technology. Australia urges all Member States to implement the General Assembly resolutions, including by enacting and improving legislation to ban the transfer of MANPADS to non-State actors.

Australia welcomes the constructive discussions held at the recent meeting of the preparatory committee for the 2006 United Nations conference to review progress made in the implementation of the small arms and light weapons Programme of Action, and we look forward to a successful review conference.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Australia for her delegation's support of the draft resolution on this issue.

I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Pemagbi (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for your initiative in convening this special meeting of the Security Council. I say "special" because this is not just another annual debate on the important issue of small arms, to be followed by a presidential statement. Today, I think Argentina has raised the issue to a higher political level in the Council, and we thank you for that. We understand that, instead of a presidential statement,

there will be a draft resolution. If adopted, it will be the first resolution concerning small arms in the global context.

Actually, despite the devastating consequences of the illicit circulation and use of small arms and light weapons, the Security Council has adopted only two resolutions on the issue. In the first, resolution 1209 (1998), the Council recognized the close relationship between the problem of illicit arms flows to and in Africa and international peace and security. It expresses, in paragraph 1,

> "grave concern at the destabilizing effect of illicit arms flows, in particular of small arms, to and in Africa and at their excessive accumulation and circulation, which threaten national, regional and international security and have serious consequences for development and for the humanitarian situation in the continent".

That was eight years ago. We know that, since then, millions of innocent people have become victims of the direct and indirect use of those weapons, not only in Africa but also in other parts of the world. We heard the Foreign Minister of Peru this morning cite figures to the effect that half a million deaths each year are attributable to small arms and light weapons. United Nations peacekeepers in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, have also been deliberately killed in the course of conflicts in which those weapons are used. The Organization continues to spend billions of dollars in peacekeeping operations that are directly or indirectly related to the excessive accumulation and circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons.

In those circumstances, we do not believe that the Security Council should, year in, year out, continue to issue presidential statements expressing, for instance, its grave concern that the destabilizing accumulation of small arms has contributed to the intensity and duration of armed conflicts. We share Argentina's view — expressed by you, Sir, a few minutes ago — that the time has arrived for the Security Council decisively and promptly to send a strong political message through a resolution on small arms and light weapons.

Two years ago, in resolution 1540 (2004), did this Council not express its grave concern at the threat of terrorism and the risk that non-State actors might acquire, develop, traffic in or use nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery? Did the Council not, accordingly, reaffirm that the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security? In that context, we share the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all", that States must strive just as hard to eliminate the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons as they do to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

We believe that the Council should now, today, in the draft resolution under consideration, go beyond the 1998 expression of grave concern and state categorically and unequivocally that the excessive accumulation and circulation of small arms, particularly illicit small arms, constitute a threat to international peace and security. Such an explicit affirmation would underscore the seriousness of the issue and the determination of the Council to deal with it more effectively.

Last year, in a presidential statement, this Council encouraged the arms-exporting countries to exercise the highest degree of responsibility in small arms and light weapons transactions according to their existing responsibilities under relevant international law. We suggest that the Council go one step further by explicitly encouraging the conclusion of an international arms trade treaty in the same way that it has affirmed its support for multilateral treaties aimed at eliminating or preventing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

We welcome with appreciation the Secretary-General's latest follow-up report on his recommendations on ways and means in which this Council could contribute to dealing with the question of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We commend the Security Council for establishing and mandating expert monitoring mechanisms for the effective implementation of sanctions, including arms embargoes. In particular, and of interest to Sierra Leone as a State that has emerged from conflict in the troubled West African subregion, we commend the United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) for the action it has taken to enforce the arms embargo by carrying out inspections, including without notice, of cargo aircraft at ports, airports, airfields and military bases, as well as at border crossings in that country. The identification of an embargo expert to advise UNOCI on ways to improve the effectiveness of the arms embargo inspection teams is also commendable.

Perhaps the most interesting development in the enforcement of the arms embargo in the West African subregion is the conclusion reached by the Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire that countries have suspended or blocked the export of military goods and services to Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the conclusion that, currently, neither the Government nor the Forces nouvelles have a strategic need or the financial capability to procure heavy and light weapons. That should contribute to the control and circulation of illicit arms in the subregion.

We note with interest the proposal mentioned earlier this morning by the Ambassador of France, in particular with regard to the problems of transporting those illicit weapons, as well as of their financing. We hope that the Security Council will soon address those problems directly.

We share the conclusion of the Secretary-General that the enforcement of Security Council resolutions on sanctions would depend on the political will and relevant technical capacity of Member States. However, since, as is often recalled, the Security Council has primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, we expect the Council to take the lead and to assume a more proactive role in our collective effort to rid the world of the scourge of the illicit trade in and excessive accumulation of small arms.

We would also like the Council to endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation that it explicitly articulate, in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, the role of peacekeeping missions on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for his kind words addressed to my delegation and the support that his country is giving to this important issue.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): The Ukrainian delegation associates itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the presidency of the European Union. We would like to touch upon some additional issues that are of considerable importance for my country.

The 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is the comprehensive framework for dealing with the illicit trade in small arms. It is the first big step forward towards achieving the goal of controlling that scourge. We hope that the follow-up process will find ways to strengthen and further develop measures contained in the Programme.

Ukraine shares the view that efforts to combat the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons are largely hampered by inadequate capacity at the national, regional and global levels to trace the sources and lines of supply of illicit arms. Effective control over brokering activities and transfers of small arms and light weapons in general is an area where the international community should take active steps. States should make their best efforts to ensure that the production, export, import, stockpiling, marking, record-keeping and transfer of small arms and light weapons are all carried out in strict adherence to international and national laws and regulations.

It is evident that promoting long-term conditions for development and security is impossible without resolving ongoing conflicts and taking adequate measures aimed at ensuring stability in post-conflict situations. We fully support the Council's consideration of actions against States, entities and individuals that deliberately violate United Nations arms embargoes. It is also important to review the lessons learned in order to ensure the efficiency of additional measures that could be taken by the Security Council. It would be useful to focus on the financial sources for purchases of illegal weapons and to define the role that international organizations, business and financial institutions and other actors at the regional and local levels can play in implementing arms embargoes.

We would like to propose some additional elements to be further explored while discussing the issue of illicit small arms and light weapons, namely, a restriction on the supply of ammunition to areas of instability and the destruction of old excess stockpiles of small arms and light weapons. Ukraine believes that the effective destruction of accumulated old stockpiles of small arms and light weapons may make an important contribution to the fight against illicit small arms and light weapons. NATO's Partnership for Peace trust fund project in Ukraine, whose purpose is to destroy 1.5 million small arms and light weapons and 100,000 tons of ammunition, is a good example in that regard.

Ukraine follows a responsible policy in the field of arms control. Our national export-control system provides for effective procedures for the licensing of exports and imports. New measures were recently put in place to improve national legislation in that field, including the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's 2000 Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Ukraine will continue to take an active part in the international efforts to combat the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and in restraining their uncontrolled proliferation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ambassador Abdelaziz of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to express Egypt's appreciation for your initiative, Mr. President, to convene this important meeting. We also thank the Secretary-General for his second report on small arms, which addresses the potential contribution of the Security Council to United Nations efforts to address the issue of the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons in the context of the issues before the Security Council. We believe that that role is based on three interdependent factors.

The first element entails imposing and enforcing arms embargoes in areas of armed conflict. The second pertains to mandating peacekeeping operations to assist in the implementation of disarmament and demobilization programmes in post-conflict situations. The third addresses the link between the illicit trade in arms and the illegal exploitation of natural resources in conflict-affected regions.

Despite the increasing number of measures adopted by the Security Council in recent years, most notably the establishment of groups of experts and mechanisms aimed at monitoring the implementation of arms embargoes, such measures have produced only limited success. In some situations, that is due to practical difficulties in the strict monitoring of arms embargoes, while in others it is due to a lack of political will in the Council to enforce certain embargoes and to ensure their implementation. We therefore believe that the Security Council ought to focus on evaluating the causes of successes and failures alike in the commitment of all parties and States to the implementation of arms embargoes resolutions, while duly taking into consideration the fact that the ultimate goal should not be limited solely to enforcing arms embargoes but, rather, should channel those embargoes towards achieving the required degree of security and stability needed to ensure the success of the political process in the countries and regions under consideration.

Moreover, the Security Council has a vital role to play in the follow-up to the implementation of disarmament and demobilization programmes for former combatants in the context of peacekeeping mandates. That is essential in ensuring security and stability, as well as in enhancing the authority of States and their security machinery in post-conflict situations. In that context, we believe that the General Assembly should agree, through its Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, on certain guidelines regarding the process of collecting, storing, securing and destroying confiscated arms in various areas of conflict so as to avoid the recirculation of those arms in a given country emerging from conflict or their transfer across its borders to neighbouring countries, which would cause further regional instability and could further jeopardize international peace and security.

The Security Council must also give importance and priority to seriously and effectively addressing the linkage between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illegal exploitation of natural resources in conflict-affected regions. The existence of such a linkage has been shown by various lessons learned and by international reports to have fuelled and prolonged conflicts and to have diminished the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, particularly in Africa. The report of the Secretary-General clearly highlights various examples and cases calling for the creation of appropriate mechanisms to address that linkage, which entails dangerous security and development implications and hinders the financing and strengthening of peacebuilding activities in countries emerging from conflict.

To that end, the delegation of Egypt reiterates its position on the need for coordination and cooperation between the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant regional organizations and arrangements, with a view to introducing effective measures aimed at breaking the linkage between the illicit trade in those arms and the illegal exploitation of natural resources in conflict-affected regions. We also call on the Security Council

to mobilize the necessary political will to pursue and hold accountable those parties and individuals implicated in activities associated with the illegal exploitation of natural resources, particularly in Africa.

The delegation of Egypt wishes to stress that the success of the United Nations in addressing the real dangers posed by small arms and light weapons will depend on its reaching consensus on the means to enhance the review process of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action, which the Assembly adopted by consensus. The Programme of Action is based on certain principles that guarantee the legitimacy and acceptance of its provisions, including the inherent right of States, individually and collectively, to self-defence and the right of self-determination of all peoples, particularly those under foreign domination or occupation. Thus, we must all cooperate to create an environment conducive to the success of the Programme of Action review conference to be held in June and July this year.

The role of the Security Council and of other United Nations organs must complement the texts, principles and provisions of the Programme of Action rather than trying to replace the Programme or to chart a parallel course aimed at addressing the issue of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The mixing of concepts on the basis of an alleged link between the various elements of conflict situations, as referred to in some sections of the Secretary-General's most recent report on small arms (S/2006/109), and the Security Council's continued attempts, in addressing the issue, to expand the scope of its mandate and its authority beyond imposing and enforcing arms embargoes in conflict situations and ensuring the success of disarmament and demobilization programmes in post-conflict situations will ultimately jeopardize our collective efforts to address the various technical, political, legal and security aspects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which shall remain under the purview and mandate of the General Assembly. Moreover, such attempts carry obvious institutional risks — which we have highlighted several times in the past — thus raising unnecessary doubts as to the overall legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of United Nations decisions and resolutions.

To emphasize that point, we recall the General Assembly's adoption at its current session of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. That achievement reaffirms the Assembly's central role — which is unchallenged by any other United Nations principal organ — and lends legitimacy and effectiveness to any arrangement adopted by consensus in the area of disarmament as well as in other areas of our multilateral activities.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Maqungo (South Africa): As this is the first time this month that my delegation has made a statement, we would like to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. My delegation also welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/109) under consideration at this meeting.

South Africa believes that the Security Council's involvement on this issue complements the efforts of the General Assembly. The Assembly remains the principal organ with the primary responsibility to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Programme of Action and to launch new initiatives in the area of small arms and light weapons. However, the continued involvement of the Security Council in small arms and light weapons is significant, particularly because there has recently been more focus on weapons of mass destruction at the expense of the issue of conventional weapons. We are of the view that this debate will also provide the necessary momentum as we approach the first review conference on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action.

Over the past few years, the Secretary-General has continued to make specific recommendations on how the Security Council could contribute in dealing with the question of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in situations under its consideration. My delegation has taken particular note of those recommendations contained in the report that refer to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action adopted in 2001.

South Africa actively participated in meetings of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. While South Africa

would have preferred a legally binding instrument and the inclusion of ammunition, we nevertheless view the adoption of the Instrument as a very positive development in this area. The implementation by all Member States of its provisions is critical in order to halt the scourge of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. It is my delegation's belief that only through collective efforts at the national, regional and international levels can the issue of illicit small arms and light weapons be effectively dealt with.

The process that led to the adoption of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons recognized the huge and catastrophic problem and the consequences of the illicit trade in these weapons. Almost five years after the adoption of the Programme of Action, diversion continues unabated. My delegation is pleased to note in the Secretary-General's report that progress is being made on the issue of the illicit brokering of small arms. The establishment of a group of governmental experts to enhance international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering will put in place a framework to deal with illicit weapons. South Africa is pleased that the group of governmental experts will begin its work immediately following the review conference on small arms and light weapons to be held in June or July 2006.

The discussions leading up to the first review conference, through biennial and regional meetings, have highlighted that much still needs to be done in implementing the Programme of Action. It has become very clear that political processes alone will not achieve the desired result, namely, to combat and eradicate the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. International assistance and cooperation are imperative in order to make significant gains against the scourge. The process has also highlighted the importance of a regional approach in addressing problems of proliferation. In that regard, South Africa participated in and hosted one of the African regional preparatory meetings for the review conference, which resulted in the adoption of the African common position on the review conference.

My delegation views the establishment of necessary legislation to ensure effective control over the export and transit of small arms and light weapons as a very significant measure in the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In that regard, South Africa is implementing the National Conventional Arms Control Act of 1993, which contains specific guiding principles and criteria for the consideration of arms transfer applications. These include adherence to international law, norms and practices, including international obligations and commitments. The Act also stipulates that arms exports require the provision of authenticated end-user certificates.

South Africa remains fully committed to the achievement of the peaceful resolution of conflicts, particularly on the African continent. In that context, South Africa supports sanctions mechanisms, such as arms embargoes, where such sanctions would advance the path to lasting peace and stability, as that complements South Africa's role in promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts on the continent.

Through its extensive involvement in peacekeeping operations in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa has experienced the value of effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) activities and has recognized that provisions relating to DDR are an essential part of the mandates of peacekeeping operations. It is for that reason that South Africa stresses the need for reliable funding of DDR programmes to guarantee the success of the entire peace process. Effective DDR programmes should include specific measures for the collection and disposal of illicit and surplus small arms and light weapons. We urge the international community and donors to support such DDR programmes in order to assist countries emerging from conflict in the implementation of these programmes.

In conclusion, my delegation views its participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an effort to enhance transparency in armaments. South Africa is pleased to have seen increased participation by Member States in the group of governmental experts mandated to assist in the preparation of a report on the continuing operation and further development of the Register. We hope that all these efforts will contribute to lasting peace, especially on the African continent, where we are beginning to see a decrease in the number of armed conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Papua New Guinea, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): As current Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Papua New Guinea.

The members of the Pacific Islands Forum welcome this opportunity to participate in this debate on small arms and wish to thank you, Mr. President, and your delegation for having convened this very important meeting. We also acknowledge Ms. Hoppe's excellent presentation.

Looking back over the past five years, we can see that countries in our region have continued to struggle with the uncontrolled flow and misuse of small arms and light weapons, which can have devastating effects on individuals and their communities.

However, we have taken practical steps at the regional level to combat this problem and to create sustainable solutions. We have continued to use the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a guide to direct and measure regional action.

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is an excellent example of regional cooperation to combat the destabilizing results of small arms proliferation. Deployed at the request of Solomon Islands in July 2003, RAMSI partners — Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga — helped restore law and order, in large part through the collection and destruction of some 3,600 weapons and over 300,000 rounds of ammunition. We are pleased to report that the focus of the RAMSI mission has now moved from conflict resolution to longer-term social and economic stability activities.

In the case of Bougainville, following a civil war that lasted 16 years, the island was recently declared weapons-free. That was accomplished by a weapons collection and disposal programme, monitored by a United Nations Observer Mission which included Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu. The first elections in autonomous Bougainville were held successfully in June last year.

Stockpile management and security also remains a strong priority for the region, with the leakage of weapons from official stocks a major source of illicit guns and subsequent criminal activity. Working in partnership with Australia and New Zealand, Pacific Islands Forum countries have made real improvements in this area. New armouries have been constructed in Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru and Samoa. Further capacity-building in this area will remain the focus of work in the next review period.

With regard to implementing relevant laws, the Pacific Islands Forum developed a common regional approach to weapons control under the Nadi Framework, which focused on the illicit manufacture of, and trafficking in, firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials. This is also an area for continued work.

Pacific Islands Forum countries also continue to pursue efforts at the national level which complement regional work. My own country, Papua New Guinea, held the Goroka Guns Summit in July 2005, following cross-country consultations by the Papua New Guinea Government's Gun Control Committee. The Summit proposed more than 200 recommendations, which are currently before the Papua New Guinea cabinet.

Much work has been done, but much, much more remains if we are to reach our goal of eradicating the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons. The members of the Pacific Islands Forum look forward to participating actively in the forthcoming Review Conference and to setting priorities for the next five years.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): Brazil is indeed very pleased to see you, Ambassador César Mayoral, holding the presidency of the Security Council once again. We are thankful to Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her presentation of the Secretary-General's report on the important item under consideration. We associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group.

The ready availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons pose a great threat to the security of States. Such weapons exacerbate conflicts, fuel international terrorism, undermine peacebuilding efforts and contribute to immense suffering. The subject of small arms, whether in the context of

disarmament, national security, public security or from a humanitarian perspective, must therefore be discussed in all relevant and appropriate forums. A solution to this problem will require the commitment of all States and the assistance of civil society, as well as the necessary input of international, regional and subregional organisms.

The delegation of Brazil is pleased to see that the Secretary-General's report indicates that some progress has been achieved by the General Assembly in the implementation of his recommendations since our last debate on small arms. The steps taken by the General Assembly towards combating the illicit trade in small arms are crucial. Despite national efforts, there are still loopholes in the regime for the legal transfer of arms that allow for their diversion to the illegal market. Much more remains to be done.

The international community has been working together in order to establish effective mechanisms to deal with the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. These efforts have been successfully conducted under the auspices of the General Assembly, which is the primary forum for dealing with issues related to the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In that context, attention should continue to be given to the process of monitoring the implementation of the measures contained in the Programme of Action of the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This is particularly important in the light of the upcoming Conference to review the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The adoption by the Security Council of a resolution on small arms is a contribution to those efforts, given that small arms are the ones most used in conflicts, including those under Security Council consideration. The resolution underlines the importance of multilateralism in dealing with global challenges and is a timely initiative towards addressing, in particular, the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report for greater interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly in developing a comprehensive United Nations policy on small arms.

Brazil attaches great importance to the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, given its adverse effects on national public security. Brazil has adapted its legislation to current necessities. In 2003, President Lula sanctioned an innovative Disarmament Statute, which restricts the bearing and possession of and commerce in arms, and criminalizes international arms trafficking. Brazil has also adopted a national arms system as a measure of preventive control.

At the subregional and regional levels, there have also been important developments. Along with the reinforcement of internal legislative measures, Brazil, together with its MERCOSUR partners, is progressively strengthening cooperation to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

At the global level, Brazil attaches the utmost importance to the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 Conference. Like other countries affected by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we emphasize the need for concrete measures to be applied by States in the follow-up process to the Conference. It is our collective duty to address the problems and outstanding issues identified at both Biennial Meetings, thus paving the way for the June Conference.

In order to fully implement the goals set out by the Programme of Action, the international community must address the many areas that so far have not been adequately dealt with, such as marking and tracing, export and import controls and brokering.

As regards marking and tracing, during the recently concluded negotiations on the instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons, Brazil supported legally binding commitments. Regrettably, in spite of the strong support of the vast majority of delegations, measures to this effect are still lacking. We continue to believe, however, that giving legally binding status to the new Instrument would considerably improve the effectiveness of the initiatives in this area. Brazil also called for the inclusion of regulations related to ammunition in the Instrument. The group, however, could not reach consensus on this issue either, despite the fact that nearly all existing multilateral treaties on the matter recognize the intrinsic connection between the problem of illicit small arms and their ammunition, and the need to deal with both in a coordinated manner.

Brazil has also been actively supporting discussions on the adoption of international controls on transfers of small arms and light weapons. Such controls may include common criteria for the authorization of transfers — provided that such criteria

are objective, transparent and non-discriminatory — as well as common operational procedures for the enforcement of national and international regulations on exports, imports and transit of small arms and light weapons. In this context, one of the most urgently needed measures is an effective ban on transfers of weapons to non-State actors not duly authorized by the competent authorities of the importing State. Within the United Nations, we expect States to agree on basic common control and cooperation elements, so that brokering activities can be effectively controlled and illicit brokering halted.

We are confident that the international community will carry on its work in a cooperative manner so that these major deficiencies do not prevent the steadfast combat against the scourge of the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. Brazil will continue to work with determination towards achieving that goal.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Brazil for the support it has given to this issue and to the draft resolution under consideration.

I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Perazza (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me to begin by extending our warmest congratulations to the Argentine Republic and to you personally on assuming the presidency of the Security Council in the month of March. We wish you every success throughout your presidency.

The delegation of Uruguay is especially pleased to see open debates being held by the Security Council. In the specific case of small arms, this open debate is one of the main mechanisms that the Council has to improve its interaction with the General Assembly, as stipulated in the recommendations contained in the 2002 report of the Secretary-General on small arms (S/2002/1053).

My delegation would like to associate itself fully with the statement made by the delegation of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group, in which they explained the position of the Group vis-à-vis the upcoming review conference. Therefore, Uruguay will simply limit itself to raising a few specific items.

Small arms and light weapons are the arms most widely used in several recent conflicts, especially those that have been considered by the Security Council. What is particularly alarming for my delegation is that 60 per cent of these small arms are found in the hands of civilians, compared to 37.8 per cent that are in the hands of armies, 2.8 per cent for the police force, and barely .2 per cent in the hands of armed groups. That is why the Government of Uruguay believes that one of the main problems to be tackled by the international community is the availability of these arms among civilian populations.

For the delegation of Uruguay, an analysis of the phenomenon of the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons should not focus only on matters of security and national sovereignty. It should also be seen as a problem that has close links with human rights and development.

Uruguay is especially pleased with the activities that the United Nations and its specialized agencies have been carrying out within the framework of the current peacekeeping missions with a view to reintegrating and demobilizing child soldiers in Afghanistan, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Sierra Leone.

With respect to the linkage with development, Uruguay expresses its deep concern over the fact that the international community has not managed to identify the best ways to redirect a part of the resources that are freed up by disarmament to economic and social development. In the last six years, for example, it has been puzzling to see that in many developing countries where there are conflicts, more then $87 billion have been spent on arms — in other words, $22 billion a year, which, used in another way, would have made it possible for those same countries to comply with the Millennium Development Goals, since they would have been able to achieve universal primary education and reduce the infant mortality rate.

According to the Interpol database, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons has not been detected in our country. Nonetheless, the Government of Uruguay has begun campaigns to destroy small arms that are not duly registered or that have come from illicit activities. Since 1998 Uruguay has destroyed 17,595 arms. Likewise, the Government of Uruguay plans to hold a new ceremony of arms destruction before the upcoming review conference. We will destroy 1,866 short and long arms, a figure which could go up to 5,502 arms if we reduce the custody period that is required by our legislation.

As was mentioned in the first national report on small arms presented by Uruguay in accordance with the Programme of Action, our country has a set of laws, standards and administrative procedures at the national level that make possible effective control over small arms and light weapons in aspects related to production, export, import, transit and transfer. Currently, our country is drawing up the second national report on small arms, which it will present at the review conference. For this purpose, we have established an inter-ministerial commission to update the information required by the Programme of Action.

Uruguay has ratified the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms. At the same time, we are applying the Model Regulations for the Control of the International Movement of Firearms drawn up by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

At the subregional level, Uruguay is part of the MERCOSUR Working Group on Firearms. One of the concrete results this has achieved is the development of a memorandum of understanding for the exchange of information on the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms. The establishment of this Working Group has facilitated the exchange of information and cooperation among MERCOSUR member States, helping to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons along borders.

Lastly, Uruguay would like to encourage all States to renew their commitment to implement unconditionally all the Security Council resolutions related to sanctions, including those through which arms embargoes are imposed, in order to control effectively the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mrs. Holguín (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to start by congratulating you on your presiding over the Security Council for the month of March and for convening this open debate on an issue so important for the international community. We would also like to thank you for introducing a resolution on this subject. We believe that this is a very positive and timely debate, taking place a few months before the conference to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. My delegation hopes to see progress this year.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group.

One of the worst tragedies affecting humankind today stems from the illicit use of and trade in small arms and light weapons. It is a fact that conflicts are fuelled, sustained and worsened by the difficulties entailed in effectively combating the illicit trade in those arms. The prospects for negotiating a way out of those conflicts appear to diminish in the face of the ever-growing flows of those weapons of war, which spread death and destruction wherever they are used.

I should now like to refer to the report of the Secretary-General, for the introduction of which I would like to thank Ms. Hoppe.

Following the pattern established by previous reports on the matter, the 12 recommendations contained in the report can be divided into those that can be directly implemented by Security Council — such as those pertaining to peacebuilding and conflict prevention — and those to be implemented by Member States, which the Council can encourage to act.

Last November, the Member States adopted in the General Assembly the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which is referred to in recommendation 1. My country expressed its disappointment with regard to the non-binding nature of the Instrument and the failure to include munitions in its text. Although, in the spirit of compromise, Colombia joined the consensus in the working group, it is worth recalling our belief in the need for a future legally binding instrument on the tracing and marking of illicit small arms and light weapons that includes minimum standards, such as those already in place in the Americas as a result of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, to which my country is a party.

My delegation is greatly concerned about the lack of significant progress with regard to legislation on the regulation of the import, export and trafficking in illicit small arms and light weapons. We are equally

concerned about the lack of progress in the area of end-user certificates, which is referred to in recommendation 9. That was evident during the second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place in July 2005. Only 100 countries, Colombia among them, submitted national reports at that gathering. To date, only a limited number of the countries that submitted national reports have legislation in place to regulate imports and exports; an even smaller number is abiding by the provisions pertaining to end-user certificates. More worrying still is the situation as regards brokering, given that fewer than 20 countries had, by the holding of the Meeting, put in place regulations on brokering, which is part of the chain of illicit trafficking.

With regard to recommendation 3, my delegation believes that it is urgent to establish effective national systems on end-user certificates. We also think it is crucial to strengthen the existing mechanism for information exchange and verification known as the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms. Only through frequent and timely exchanges of information among members can regional strategies be agreed to combat the problem and the groundwork be laid for the adoption of future additional measures, such as post-loading verification of exports and double-checks on the authenticity of end-user certificates.

We also believe it important to exchange information and to develop clear policies on agreeing minimum standards on the civilian possession of weapons. It is also important to pursue efforts to reach an international agreement on the transfer of arms.

With regard to issues pertaining to small arms, my delegation is concerned that there has not been more interaction between the General Assembly and the Council in developing long-term strategies in the context of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, to which recommendation 4 refers, nor has there been significant progress with regard to existing links between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illicit exploitation of natural resources, and no progress at all regarding links to the illegal trade in narcotics, to which recommendation 6 refers. As regards Colombia, the latter is of crucial importance.

Small arms and light weapons, which every year cause millions of deaths around the world, are true weapons of mass destruction. It is therefore truly paradoxical that most conflicts in which small arms and light weapons are used take place in the developing world, and that most of those weapons are produced in the developed world. That is a terrible paradox that merits the application of a principle that has already been accepted in the fight against the illicit trade in narcotics, namely, that of shared responsibility. My delegation has made that proposal on previous occasions. As the Security Council has previously acknowledged, arms-exporting countries have an obligation to act with the highest degree of responsibility in such transactions, and it is the duty of every country to prevent the diversion and illegal re-exportation of small arms and light weapons to illicit channels.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Colombia for supporting my delegation in its call to address this matter in plenary meeting.

Given that there are still a considerable number of speakers remaining on my list, I intend to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.30 p.m.